

NEW

ART & ADVICE **WORKSHOPS** **GALLERIES** **AND MORE!**

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

ImagineFX

ANNUAL



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ANDREIA UGRAI



LEFFIES ART

**Digital
Edition**

FUTURE

**VOLUME
SIX**

Welcome to **NO.1** FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS **ImagineFX** **ANNUAL**

Welcome to the very best content from the last year of **ImagineFX** magazine.

Packed with fantastic tutorials to help you master traditional and digital art, interviews with some of the best creators in movies and gaming, and illustrations from some of our favourite contributors, there is something for everyone inside, whether you're a budding artist just starting out or a seasoned pro looking to brush up on some new skills. On top of all this, we've included some brilliant free resources for you to use in your projects, including brushes and start files that enable you to follow the tutorials in the bookazine. There is a link to these online tutorials on page 7. Enjoy!



「 FUTURE 」

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX ANNUAL

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Advertising

Media packs are available on request

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Printed in the UK

Distributed by Marketforce, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5HU
www.marketforce.co.uk Tel: 0203 787 9001

ImagineFX Annual Volume Six (CTB4568)

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Future plc is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (symbol: FUTR).
www.futureplc.com

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Part of the
NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX
bookazine series

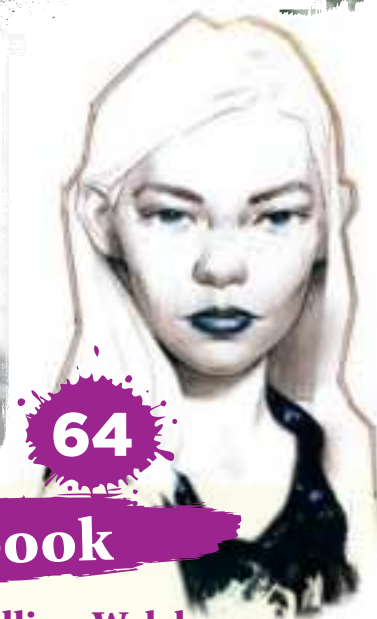


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FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR ART

2



Dmitry Klyushkin

LOCATION: Russia MEDIA: Paint Tool SAI, Photoshop

WEB: artstation.com/klyushkin

Dmitry specialises in concept art, having been fascinated by the process of inventing objects. "The most appealing part of my work is to imagine the condition of an object."

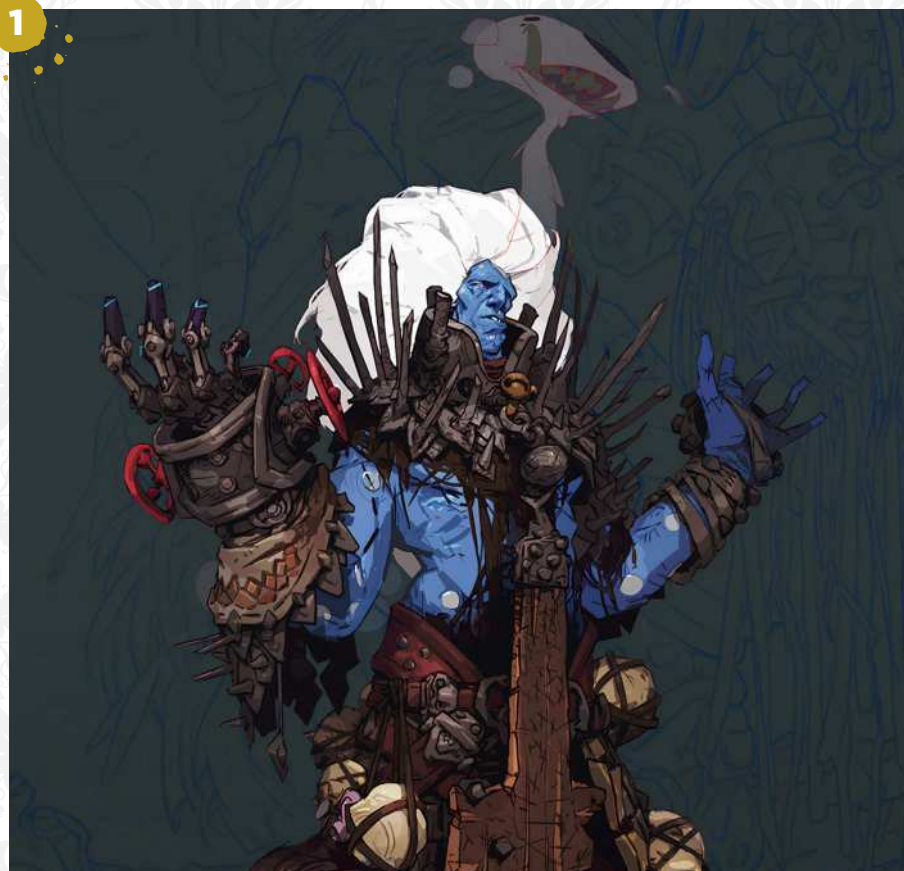
1 GOY

"At the time of inventing this character, I had almost no muscular guys in my portfolio, so I decided to draw a broad-shouldered strong warrior."

2 KAYUN

"Magical child of the Moon and Earth, and Princess of the night. The image was created for a competition. Finding the character of the girl wasn't easy!"

1



3 HUNTERS

"These characters were invented for a competition. The task consisted of creating opposing people who knew nature and monkeys who wanted to become human".

4 STATION

"This was created for my small project ASH. The action takes place at a busy station, where carts arrive and citizens are in a hurry. A boy, dressed in a suit with advertising, wanders by all this."



IMAGINEFX

3



4





Justyna Gil

LOCATION: Poland **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** artstation.com/gilyoona

Justyna is a fantasy illustrator focusing on imaginative realism with a strong emphasis on colour and light. Her clients include Wizards of the Coast, CD Projekt Red, and many more.



1 VEIL OF PROTECTION

"This is an allegorical image that depicts the human heart subject to the seven deadly sins."

2 MAGIC: THE GATHERING - THE ROYAL SCIONS

"Fake it till you make it. This piece of fan art was created shortly before I started working officially on MtG."

© Wizards of the Coast



3 MAGIC: THE GATHERING - DAWNBRINGER AURELIA

"This is the first illustration I'd done after two years in game-dev, creating marketing assets."

4 FIFTH OATH OF THE RED ARMY

"This piece is an experiment where I wanted to perfect a realistic cinematic approach."

5 MAGIC: THE GATHERING - MADCAP

"Behold Lorehold imprudent students! Artwork that appeared on the Audacious Reshapers card."





© Wizards of the Coast



© Wizards of the Coast



Reza Afshar

LOCATION: Iran **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Procreate **WEB:** artstation.com/rezaafshar

Inspired by video games like Prince of Persia and films such as The Lord of the Rings, Reza has been working as an artist for eight years. Despite leaning towards science fiction lately, he aims to make his work believable.



1 DISCOVERY

"An illustration for a personal series called Discovery, which is about a group of astronauts looking to find alien civilizations."

2 MAN, BULL, TOWER

"The idea for this came from an old brick kiln in my hometown of Hamedan. The man and the cow are from ancient cave paintings."

3 FATHER AND SON

"An illustration from my steampunk sci-fi series. I wanted to show a father and son's journey to a futuristic city."







Alex Vede Cabalar

LOCATION: Spain **MEDIA:** Sketchbook Pro, Procreate **WEB:** alexvede.bigcartel.com

Alex says: "What inspires me the most is cinema. I always try to make my art as cinematic as possible, seeking movement and dramatic compositions."

1 THE ASTRONAUT

"This is one of my characters. He has a whole story behind him that I hope I can tell someday in a full-length comic book."

2 ASTRONAUT EXPLORERS

"Leaving part of the frame in darkness makes the details and the light more vibrant."

3 SOMETHING ON THE BEACH

"This one was painted over a very small pencil thumbnail. I usually make the best compositions from very fast and small sketches."



4 BATTLE IN MOUNT FUJI

"Part of a series of illustrations inspired by old Japanese woodprints. I used traditional inks then built up the colour digitally."





Alexander Ngo

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Procreate WEB: alexvngo.com

Alex is a freelance illustrator whose clients include Paizo, Hit Point Press and Green Ronin Publishing. "I enjoy painting works that have a strong sense of mood," says the artist.

1 BULEZAU

"I've been enjoying character design. Here's my rendition of a classic D&D monster."

2 ALL'S LOST

"This was my 'pandemic piece'. I just wanted to capture a feeling of despair and uncertainty."

3 BLOODCASTER

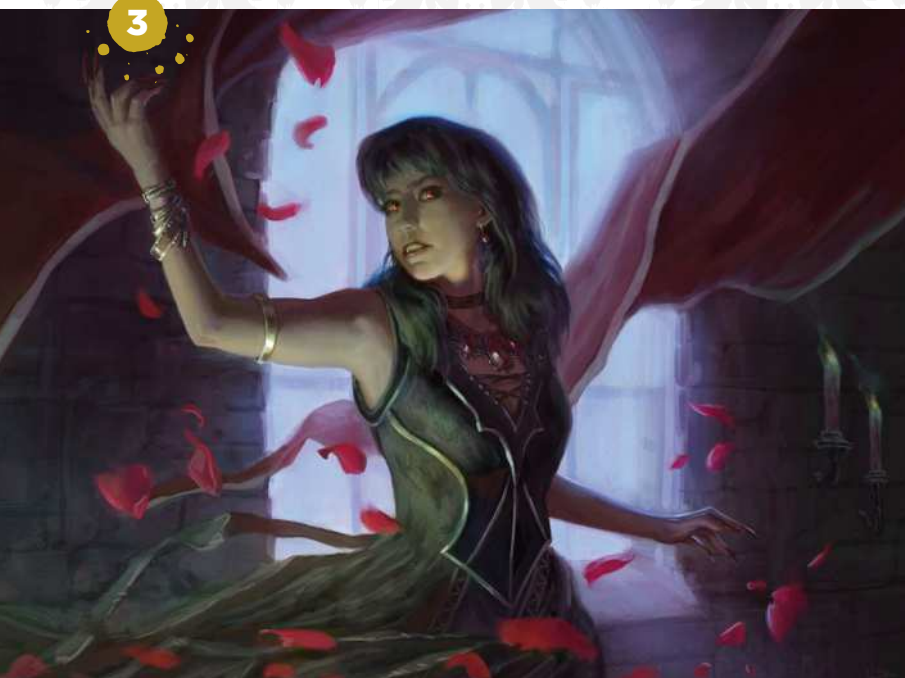
"I'd love to create work for Magic: The Gathering and this was my rendition of one of its cards from the Crimson Vow set."



2



3



4





© Hit Point Press

5

4 SPORE ZOMBIE

"Another fun character design. Really enjoyed playing with all the different textures in this one."

5 SOPHIE'S LAB

"A fun painting I did for Hit Point Press's Heckna Project. I enjoyed trying to capture the feeling of a mad scientist in her lab."



Andreia Ugrai

LOCATION: Romania **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Procreate **WEB:** www.artstation.com/andreiaugrai

Andreia is a freelance artist who creates dark fantasy characters and illustrations. She has worked on card art and book covers for clients like Magic: The Gathering and Iron Helmet Games.

1 INDESTRUCTIBLE

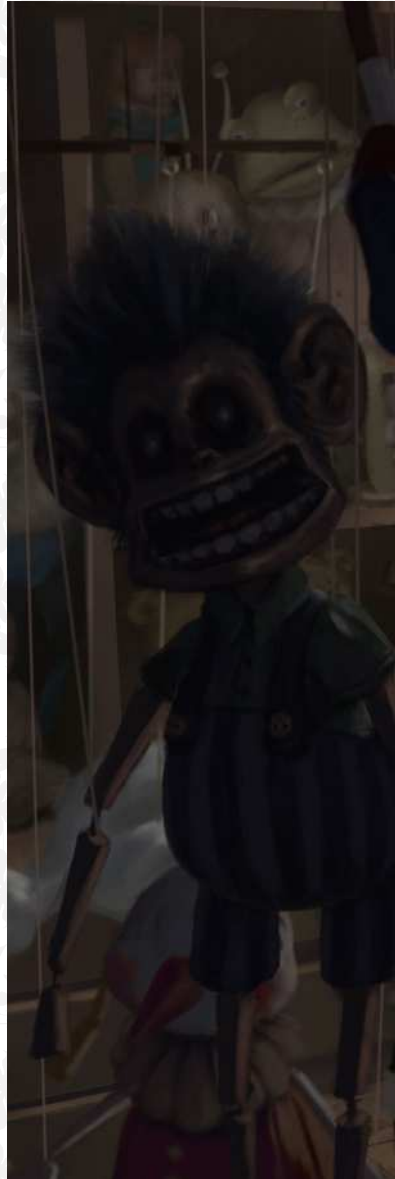
"Worshippers pay their respects to a powerful creature that is impossible to defeat, which is trapped in a mysterious sphere."

2 SURVIVOR

"Despite the haze, heights and dangers, this determined man managed to survive 15 years in a doomed city."



© Ghostfire Gaming



2



© Ghostfire Gaming



3 TOYMAKER

"The evil, deranged Toymaker. She has a wicked grin on her face and wide unsettling eyes working on a Marie O'Nett puppet."

4 UNSTABLE ECTOPLASM

"Beware of the destructive influence of this strange, ectoplasm substance as it will audaciously devour and choke you."



Michael DaCruz

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** artstation.com/madsamuri2240

Michael has been on a bit of a hiatus, “but I am slowly working my way back on to the illustration wagon one drawing at a time, aiming to be a full-time illustrator working on my own narrative art.”

1 MISHIMA

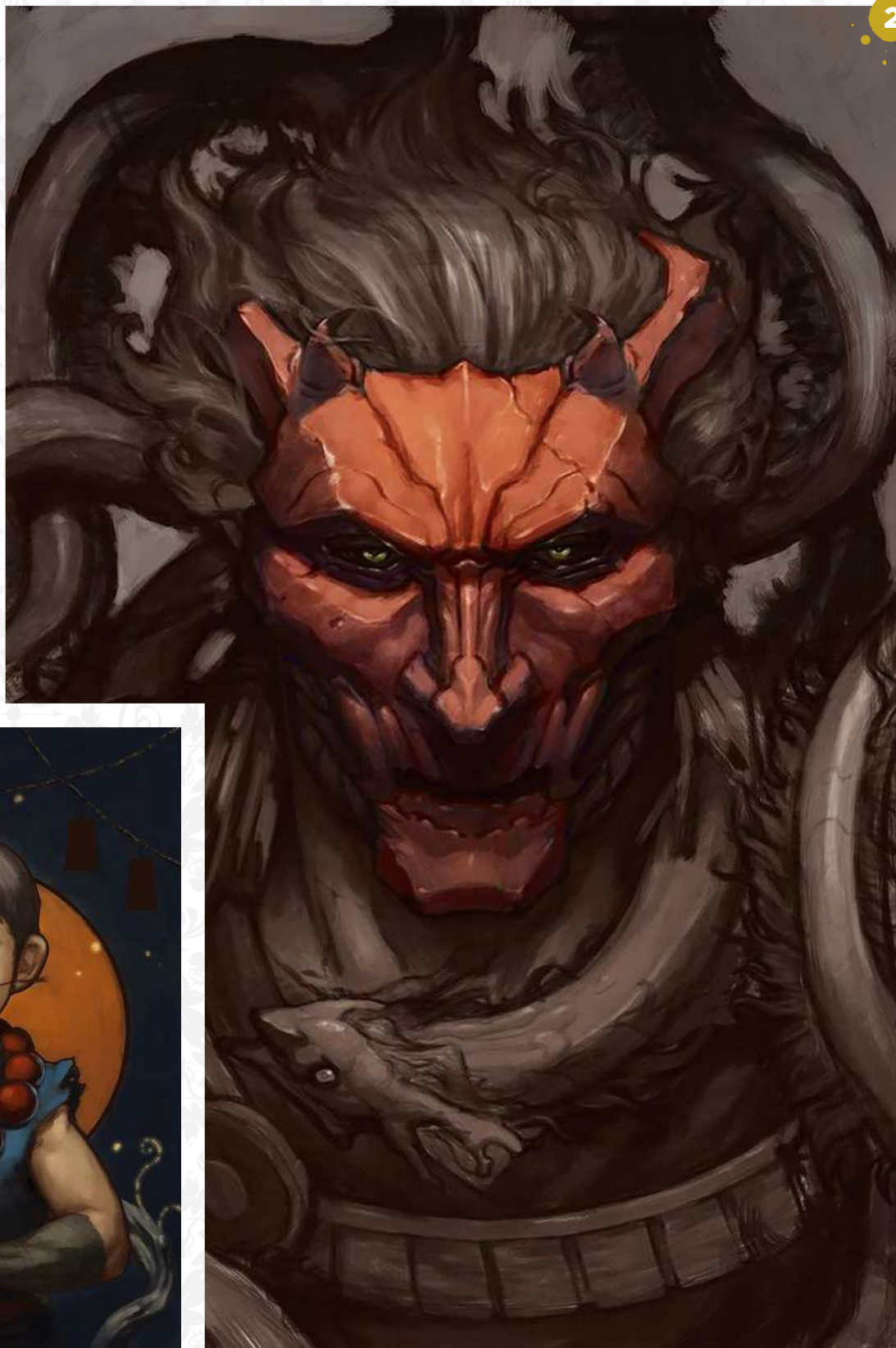
“A concept from my 99th Soul story, though I can’t say much without giving away too much of the Shyamalan ‘twist’, other than he represents something better in the narrative.”

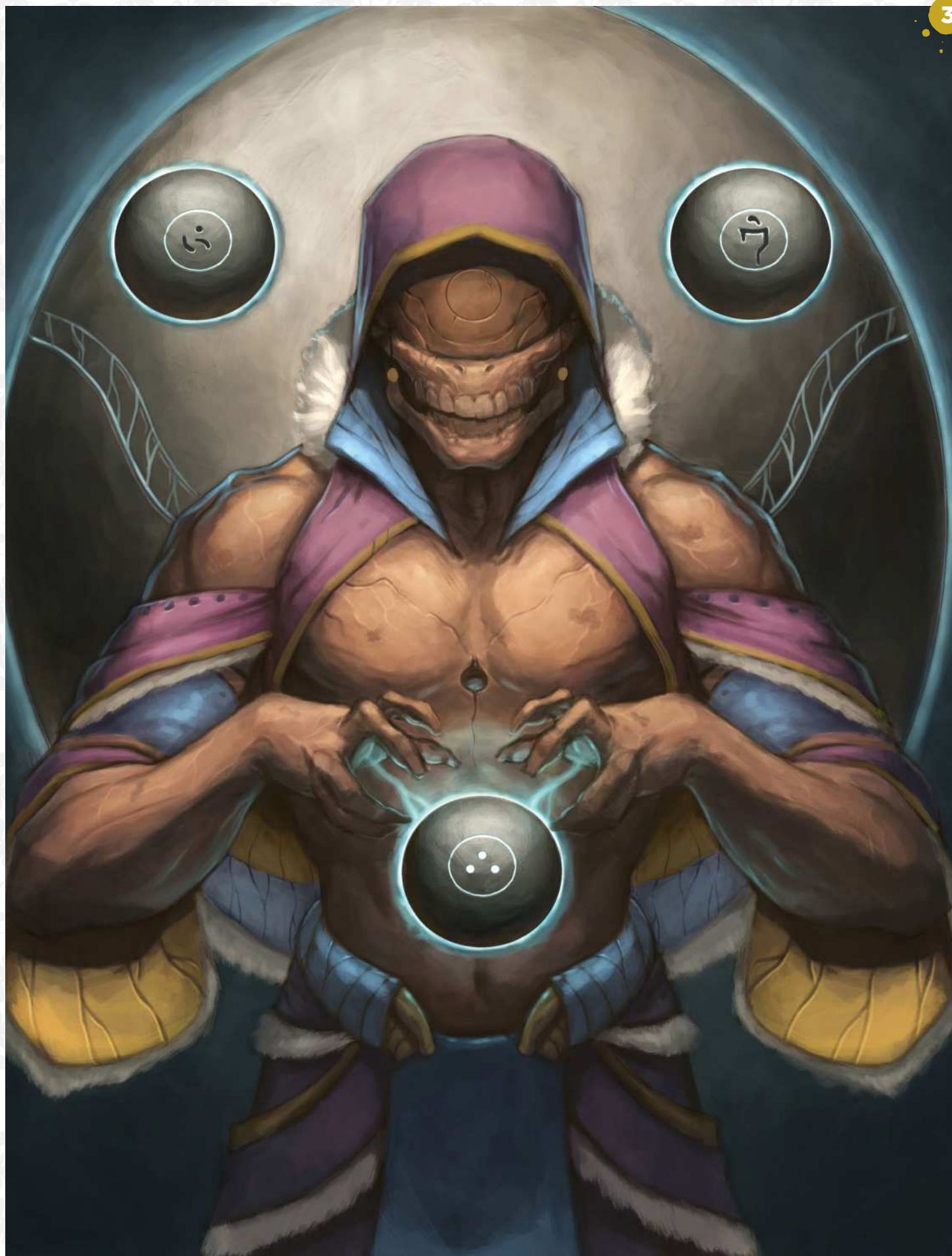
2 99TH SOUL

“Down inside all of us sits a dark spot, but how should we feed the beast?” This is another concept from the 99th Soul story brewing in the background.”

3 AHRIMAN

“A concept from an old comic I had been working on back in college, the story fell flat but I kept some of the designs and reworked them accordingly.”







Stephen Sitton

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Blender, Maya **WEB:** www.artstation.com/stumpyfongo

After graduating with a BFA in illustration, Stephen created artwork for the marketing side of the entertainment industry with clients including Disney/Pixar, Activision, EA Games, and Hasbro.

1 WEREWOLF GOD

"This was based on a challenge to only use complementary or opposite colours. Limiting the scope of what we create can yield some interesting and unintended results!"

2 DANI'ALLIAH BRIGHTBLOOD

"This is a World of Warcraft inspired character commission depicting a High Elf Monk. My goal was to create a bold sense of movement, drama, and foreshortening."

3 NIX

"This is an original character design inspired by cyberpunk and vaporwave aesthetics. Nix is a powerful sea elf mage that works as a bouncer at a high-end nightclub."







Songmuang Chuaynukoon

LOCATION: Thailand **MEDIA:** Photoshop, pigment ink pen **WEB:** www.instagram.com/meetmrtwoillust

Song is a freelance illustrator with a passion for Japanese manga and detailed work. “Most of my artworks are themed around childhood moments, antiques, old school toys, and amusing moments that express emotions.”

1 SIBLING WAR

“This piece is about fighting between siblings. It might seem to be a little thing for grown-ups, but for kids, it is more than that.”

2 FURY

“This image refers to anger. It’s like a fire burning inside people’s minds. Even if it’s hot and makes them suffer, people choose to not let go and keep carrying it with them anyway.”

3 HEALER

“Illustration for ‘Dear Year of the Ox, please BE KIND’; a new year project I did to spread a positive message about the Ox year.”

4 SPIRIT OF YOUTH

“A depiction of my ideal childhood fairy: a girl whose dress is decorated with toys and stuff from my old memories.”









Iwo Widuliński

LOCATION: Poland **MEDIA:** Photoshop, ZBrush, traditional and colour pencils **WEB:** www.artstation.com/widulinski

Iwo is an illustrator and concept artist keen on dark fantasy worlds, dynamic poses and twisted monsters. "My tastes were moulded in the fires of 90s pop culture, including Labyrinth, Dark Crystal and The NeverEnding Story."

1 PATRON

"I wanted to show a strong bond between an apprentice and his mentor/protector. I liked the idea of showing the cost of becoming this powerful being. Done for the Evilbook2 project."

2 SSS'RA

"For the upcoming Master Of Magic, developed by MuHa Games. A piece I had great fun producing. It has it all: dragons, VFX, a rocky environment, jewellery. I can render wings for days!"

3 MERLIN

"Another piece from MoM. My take on a well-known wizard. My idea was to depict his strength even in his posture."



© MuHa Games, Slitherine Ltd.





Iryna Khymych

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Oil WEB: irynakhymych.com

Originally from the Ukraine, Iryna studied English literature in New York City. "Today, I'm a freelance illustrator who loves to paint strong characters."



2



3



1 PERSEPHONE GODDESS OF SPRING

"Persephone at the entrance to the underworld. I wanted to combine the imagery of death and rebirth."

2 SUNRISE GUARDIAN

"In this painting I wanted to depict a priestess who's guarding an archway to the otherworld."

3 KALADIN STORMBLESS

"This painting of Kaladin Stormblessed is based on Brandon Sanderson's series of fantasy novels, The Stormlight Archive."

4

4 **SHALLAN DAVAR**

"Also based on Brandon Sanderson's *The Stormlight Archive*. Shallan bearing her cross, coming to terms with who and what she is."



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34. Life lessons

From experimenting to knowing when to stop, Marvel legend Adi Granov shares his advice on becoming a better artist

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SWINGING IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

The webslinger takes aim at the reader, in Adi Granov's variant cover for Spider-Man: City at War #1.

ADI GRANOV

LIFE LESSONS

From experimenting to knowing when to stop, Marvel legend **Adi Granov** shares his advice on becoming a better artist

Few artists have had as much impact in the whole of Marvel's output quite like Adi Granov. He's best known for his work on Iron Man: Extremis, but he's also found time to contribute to the

biggest Marvel Cinematic Universe movies – Iron Man, Black Panther,

Avengers: End Game – as well as video games, including Marvel's Avengers and Iron Man VR.

"It was all an extension of the same thing for me. I never really planned to work in comics specifically, it just happened. I wanted to draw and paint science fiction and action art, so whatever allowed me to do that, I was

happy to jump into," says the legendary artist.

Adi tells us his art style translates well across all forms of media, and this was a deliberate decision on his part. "I loved films, comics, games and toys, so never wanted to limit myself to just one," he says. "I've worked in games a lot longer than comics, and have now spent more time on movies than I ever did on anything else, but because comic work is more immediate – from my desk straight to the readers – it's the thing which is most prominent."

STORIES BEHIND THE ART

With such an exhaustive portfolio, does Adi have one cover he covets above all of them?

"Not really..." he tells us, but some stick out for personal reasons: "The Galactus [cover] I'm very happy with as he's one of my favourite characters from childhood and I feel like I did him justice. The Wolverine on the motorcycle feels like my definitive depiction of him – all power and fury. The A New Hope cover was very exciting as I got to do spaceships and then George Lucas bought the original painting, which is very cool. So, yes, there is a story behind many of them which gives them life beyond just what you see in print."

The artist counts Jean Giroud among his inspirations. Hints of the French icon's style can be seen in Adi's best work. Syd Mead and Hajime Sorayama are also in the artist's DNA, as well as Drew Struzan and Richard Amsel. "I started studying their work in college as I got more interested in using airbrushes," he says.

His influences and workload are diverse, which means Adi never relies on one art form to get the job done. His comic covers are all rendered in mostly acrylic paints, while film and video game designs are done digitally in Photoshop, "unless I get bored and do an occasional traditional piece".

Traditional, digital, or sculpting in ZBrush, Adi approaches his work with a sense of freedom. If you want to achieve a career in comic art that's filled with the variety and opportunities as Adi, then follow his advice...



THE SECRET TO SUCCESS

"I see success as something in the past, while I tend to view failure as a challenge to do better in the future. I suppose I'm driven by the concept of success as well, but I always tend to focus on things I could do better. Nothing ever feels as if it couldn't have been done at least a little bit better, which is probably a good thing as it keeps me motivated to keep learning and improving."



STICKING THE LANDING

Boba Fett channels his inner Iron Man, in Adi's Star Wars #1 Forbidden Planet variant cover.

AND... FIGHT!

Adi's depiction of Iron Man taking on Iron Monger appeared on the cover of The Art of Iron Man.



3

KNOW WHEN TO WALK AWAY

"I find that with experience you learn that art is like an elastic band and you can keep stretching it until it breaks, so the trick is knowing where that sweet spot is to leave it under as much tension as possible, but not going overboard. Over the years I've killed a lot of paintings by overdoing them, so I try to judge the limit, but it's always a challenge."

2

TAKE THE TIME TO LEARN A NEW SKILL

"I've always found sculpture more natural than drawing and painting, so I'm really enjoying ZBrush. I'm not sure I could claim that everyone should do it, but there are also no drawbacks to learning new skills. For me, the most difficult part was just learning the interface and all the various tools and ways of achieving what I want. The actual sculpting part has been really fun."

DON'T LOOK UP

Galactus is one of Adi's favourite comic characters – he portrayed Marvel's planet-eating villain for the variant cover of 2015's *The Amazing Spider-Man* #12.

UNEASY RIDER

Adi spent time making sure his depiction of Wolverine's motorbike was accurate, in this painting created for Sideshow Collectibles.



4

LOVE YOUR HEROES

"Jean Giraud [Moebius] changed my life. He was my first true hero and he was very versatile with a massive imagination. His work is what gave me the idea that I can do many different things as he worked in comics and movies and in different styles and even under different names. It felt like he was always pushing and exploring. He also did one of my favourite Marvel stories, Silver Surfer Parable, with Stan Lee."



AGAINST ALL ODDS

Keyframe art that Adi created for the film Iron Man 2, that shows a suited-up Tony Stark and War Machine battling against multiple Hammer Drones.

5

EMBRACE DIVERSITY

"A lot of my heroes in movies, music and sports looked different from me and as a kid it just seemed natural. Of course, I was naive, but it wasn't until I moved to the US that I realised all the socio-political issues surrounding race, gender and sexual orientation. My groups of friends have always tended to be very mixed, so it was always natural that all should be represented respectfully. It's not something that I've had to force, but it is something that I've tried to embrace."





ADI GRANOV

CLAWS OUT

Black Panther takes on Erik Killmonger in Adi's dynamic artwork, created for Marvel Studios Fine Art Print line.

6

KEEP AN OPEN MIND

"If there's one theme to my life as an artist, it's that I'm obsessed with learning and absorbing as much as I can from anywhere I can. Otherwise it feels like I'm short-changing myself. I always try to advise young artists to keep their minds open to everything around them, but sometimes it's hard to convince people that the specific interest they have will only be helped by broadening their horizons."

IT'S... COMPLICATED

A tender moment between The Vision and Scarlet Witch. Adi's art appeared on the variant cover of Deadpool #13.

8

LEARN FROM PAST ERRORS

"I never go back and work on a painting once it's done, but I do look at them and try to learn from the things I see as deficient and improve on the next one."

7

CHALLENGE YOURSELF

"I really enjoy doing layouts more than I ever did before. Lately I'm having huge fun just sketching ideas. I try to be a future friend to myself as I'm the one who will have to paint them, but I still take pleasure in coming up with challenging layouts to push things beyond the ordinary."

**FLYING HIGH**

Captain Marvel soars in variant cover art from Infinity Countdown #1.

**RED-LETTER DAY**

For the 600th issue of Daredevil, Adi teamed the blind crime-fighter with the assassin Elektra.

9

CHOOSE GOOD COLLABORATORS

"I've done so few collaborations with writers that my experience is limited, but as with anything, working with the right people is important. It's crucial that the styles gel and there's an understanding that for it to work, there has to be collaboration."

STRIKE A POSE

Keyframe art created by Adi for 2012's film The Avengers, with a US super-soldier leading the fight against an alien invasion.



10

FOCUS ON THE FOUNDATIONS

"Make sure that the structure of the layout and the drawings are solid and worked out. You don't want to be fighting poor foundations after you start rendering. Much better to spend the time early on to get it right, especially in multi-character pieces where there will be a lot of anatomy, posing, perspective, lighting and so on."



Let the art do the talking is something you don't hear too often in the social media age. A new

illustration is often accompanied by interviews, hot takes and reactions. The art team behind Final Fantasy XIV and its latest expansion, Endwalker, are a little more old fashioned. They rarely appear for interviews, safe in the knowledge that the art they create is some of the best in the industry.

Speaking exclusively to ImagineFX, we meet some of the talented artists behind one of the longest-running video game series. With Final Fantasy XIV: Endwalker releasing 7 December, the latest expansion for the successful



THE ART OF FINAL FAN

MMORPG, the famously shy artists behind the worlds, creatures and characters reveal their approach to producing consistently beautiful art and game designs.

Final Fantasy is one of the world's most popular and long-running video games series. **Ian Dean** discovers how the art team creates its innovative worlds and characters

BACKGROUND BY DESIGN

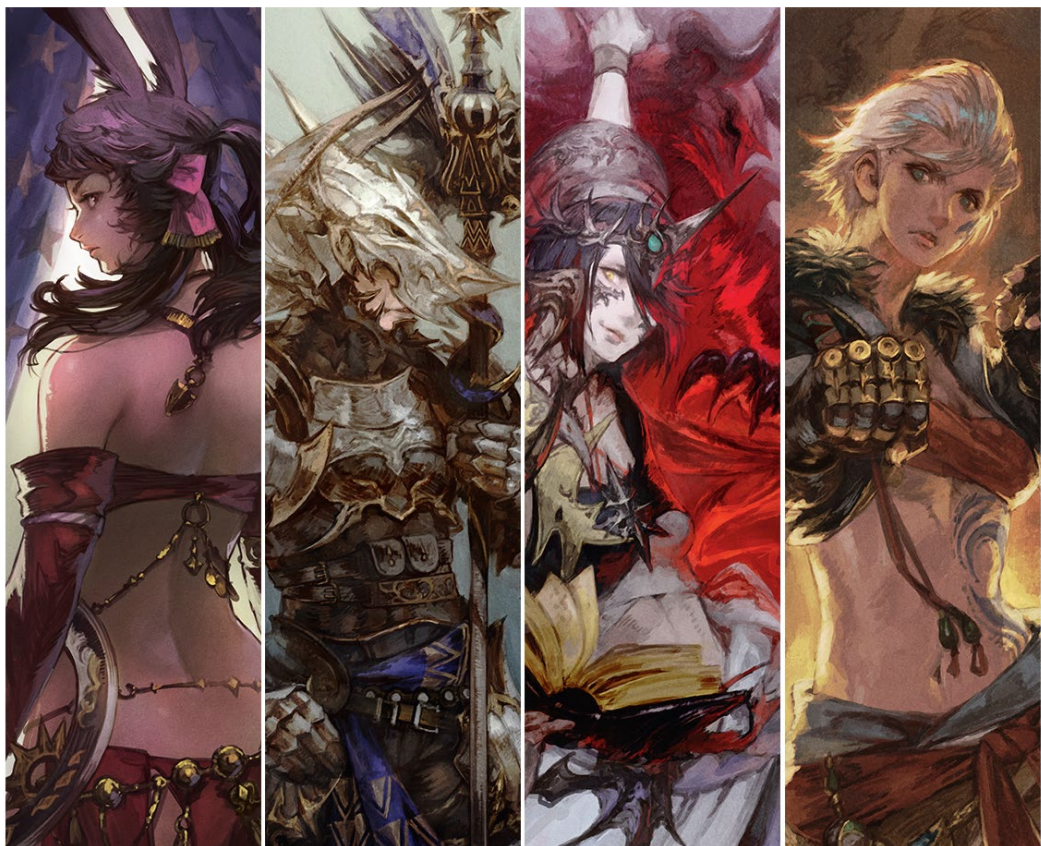
Like many, background concept specialist Rokuma Saito knew from an early age he wanted to be an artist. At high school he'd "visually express the landscapes that I imagined in my head." It was an obsession that led him to "try my hand as an artist in game production".

The names of the places he's helped create – Thavnair, Eulmore and Abalathia – play on the tongue; the dextrous titles suggest magical, extravagant worlds and they don't disappoint. Saito-san's landscapes feature rocky plateaus teetering on crystal points and colourful towns nestled in green mountains that recall southern European villages by way ➡

ENDWALKER JOBS

Jobs are the classes players can use in the FFXIV online MMORPG, and art team lead Yusuke Mogi has illustrated them all...

Ian Dean





TASY XIV ENDWALKER





RADZ-AT-HAN (INSIDE)

This city region is now new and explorable in FFXIV, Saito-san says it's a vibrant and colourful space, and paired with intricate details.



EULMORE AETHERYTE

Concept art created by Saito-san to illustrate the town of Eulmore, first introduced in Shadowbringers.

➡ of Mumbai. The worlds he paints appear to be in motion and inspired by competing influences, but they work together to create innovative spaces for players to become lost in.

The artist says he's inspired by "the scenery of places I've visited in the past, photos of places I've never been to, pictures by various artists," as well as films, games, anime and manga. "Like many artists," continues Saito-san, "I get my inspiration from the things around me. In the last few years I've learned a great deal from the Impressionists of the 19th century."

When creating an environment Saito-san will look to the real world but then clash, crush and combine locations to find new ideas. His style is unique in video game concept art because it's defined and stylistically unique while remaining identifiable as Final Fantasy art. The artist uses vibrant colour to create restless spaces that demand to be explored. He tells us his style was developed early in life,

while still at high school. He read the manga Record of Lodoss War, illustrated by Akihiro Yamada – "that totally blew me away," he says. This, shares Saito-san, became the starting point for his current art style. The artist clarifies: "The final turning point for me to join the games industry was Vagrant Story, which was released by Squaresoft [prior to the merger] in 2000. I was quite heavily influenced by Akihiko Yoshida, who handled the art for this title."

BRINGING LIFE TO SCENES

The concept art for the city of Radz-at-Han inside the land of Thavnair, new to Final Fantasy XIV: Endwalker, showcases Saito-san's ability to draw in the viewer. The scene is bustling with activity, the characters urge us into the painting, and the use of colour rarely lets the eye settle. We're forced to scour the scene picking up visual clues and cues as to what this place will be like to roam within.



VIERA SAGE

Mogi-san's new Viera concept for Endwalker, created with a line-art style influenced by Akihiko Yoshida.



ALPHINAUD LEVEILLEUR

Namae-san created this concept to show how faithful companion Alphinaud Leveilleur will look in Endwalker, the first redesign of the character since 2013.

RADZ-AT-HAN

Saito-san's colour-packed art teases how the new city of Radz-At-Han will look to players of FFXIV: Endwalker.



Humbly, Saito-san says he feels colouring is one of his weakest skills "because during my time as a student, I'd always draw in monochrome". It's an area of his art he's been working hard on since becoming a professional.

"The impact that colour has in art on the viewer is so great that it can evoke emotions and stories all by itself,"

◆◆ I think that colour can help modellers and designers understand the concept art ◆◆

divulges Saito-san, explaining colour use in concept art is vitally important. "In the case of game production, I think that colour can help modellers and designers understand the concept art. Based on these ideas, I'd say that in addition to 'enriching the appearance of the picture', I place importance on 'conveying the elements contained within, without misunderstanding'."

Saito-san begins a new concept with paper and pencil to come up with the raw ideas. "I don't often start immediately with drawing digitally. I let the image develop on paper, and

when I'm satisfied that I've reached a stage where I feel it'll work – even if it's not fully drawn – I'll scan it," he says.

The scan marks the start of the digital phase for Saito-san, who then uses Photoshop mainly for his background paintings and switches to Paint Tool SAI for the character's line-art, importing these into Photoshop when detail is needed.

Saito-san says this is his new workflow: "There used to be a time when I'd complete the production of design and concept art using only traditional 'analog' materials, ➡



➡ but now I've settled on this way of doing things, considering the combination of time, quality and freedom."

GIVE ART CHARACTER

Lead character concept artist Ayumi Namae has been on a similar journey with her art. There was a time, she tells us, that she would only use Photoshop, but for the past five years Clip Studio Paint has been her go-to software for Final Fantasy XIV designs.

"Functionally," she begins, "there's not much difference between the two, but I feel that the touch when drawing and/or the sensation of it feels better for me."

As with Saito-san, Namae-san begins most concept art for her game projects using pencils for her line-work, "but sometimes with mechanical pencils or ballpoint pens," she adds, telling us she'll then digitally paint the scanned sketches.

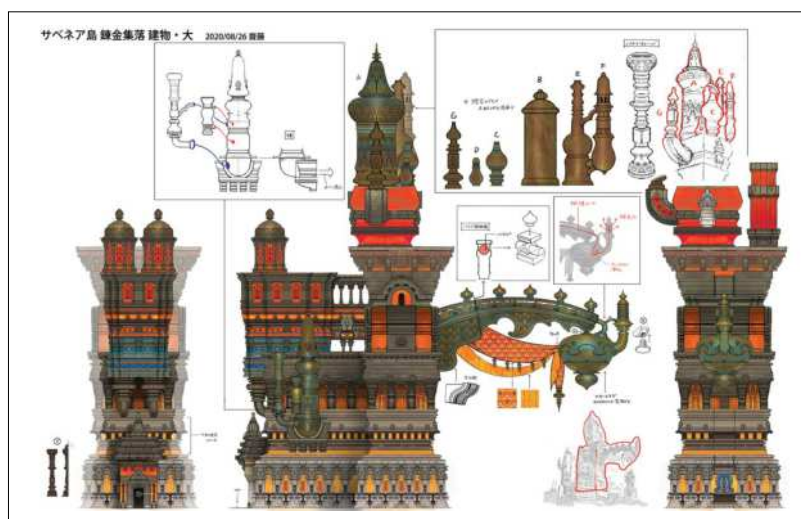
◆◆ I feel that the touch when drawing and/or the sensation of it feels better for me ◆◆

DANCER

Namae-san says: "I often create design illustrations or promotional illustrations by using a combination of various tools such as pencil, pen, watercolour, and airbrush so that no 'analog' lines remain."

THAVNAIR BUILDING

Saito-san says: "The reason I started drawing in the first place was due to the huge influence of Neon Genesis Evangelion, which I watched when I was a young boy."



"I'm not very particular about how I draw, and I still haven't settled on a certain way of drawing because I go through a trial-and-error process every time, depending on the motif, subject matter and technique I want to try at the time," she reveals.

"When I want to minimise the time spent on a design illustration, I leave the 'analog' lines in place and only lightly colour and adjust the lines, but when the texture and feel of the

materials are important design elements, I may include the texture of dirt and so on in the illustration."

Namae-san has been designing characters since 2006's Final Fantasy XII, but she's become more known for her work on Final Fantasy XIV and its expansions, concepting and updating some of the main heroes and villains of the online series.

Her love of the Final Fantasy series comes through as we delve into



MALE VIERA

You'll be able to play as a male Viera in Endwalker, and Mogi-san gives us a glimpse.



White Mage A14
final fantasy xiv
art : ayumi namae

Namae-san's influences, particularly on her rendering of armour. She has a clear passion for the RPG series, saying "the Job images from the early Final Fantasy pixel art days and Yoshitaka Amano's design lines in the Final Fantasy series," have been a major inspiration for her. But Namae-san also looks to the real world, historical fashion and fantasy series such as Game of Thrones and The Lord of the Rings for new ideas.

"Final Fantasy XIV has many different cultures, so I gather motifs that suit each of them and reconstruct them to create the base of the design," she tells us, offering an example. The Paladin had an orthodox platemail-based design in the new game. "[It has] a little bit of glamour," says ➡

WHITE MAGE

Namae-san says she designed this mage character based on medieval fantasy film costumes and as a reference to the older Final Fantasy pixel art games.

THE AMANO INFLUENCE

Iconic Final Fantasy artist Yoshitaka Amano became a crucial influence, reflects **Ayumi Namae**



Ayumi Namae was responsible for the various forms of the Bard's costume but says the Choral Attire

that was created for the 2006 expansion A Realm Reborn is one of her favourites.

"It's a particularly memorable set of gear," the artist says. "Looking back now, I think it was the first step in incorporating Amano-san's graceful Final Fantasy design lines into Final Fantasy XIV's equipment."

Now, some years later, the line-work and designs of the legendary Final Fantasy artist Yoshitaka Amano are incorporated into, and inspire, much of the work of the Final Fantasy XIV art team. Looking back before A Realm Reborn, Namae-san says: "At that time, the designs were mainly rugged and there were no pieces of gear close to Amano's design

lines. When Naoki Yoshida was appointed to Final Fantasy XIV and during the gear selection process, the idea of Choral Attire was selected for the AF1 series [AF refers to Artifact Armor, gear earned with level increases], which we were working on as the centrepiece under the statement of 'creating a Final Fantasy' for Patch 2.0. I was, of course, happy, but at the same time I was confused and worried."

She continues: "The designer team, including the 3D team, now has more experience and is able to create designs with a higher degree of freedom than when we were working on Patch 2.0. However, when we were working on the Choral Attire there were many asymmetrical parts and a large area of soft cloth that was difficult to express with polygons, making the production quite a challenging process."



A DESIGN THAT LOOK TO THE PAST

"The bard's Tier 1 Artifact Armor, Choral Attire, was designed with Yoshitaka Amano's design line in the Final Fantasy series strongly in mind."



CREATING THE ICONIC ALEXANDER PRIME

Tetsu Tsukamoto details how he approaches conceptualizing the stages of a classic boss

Give it legs

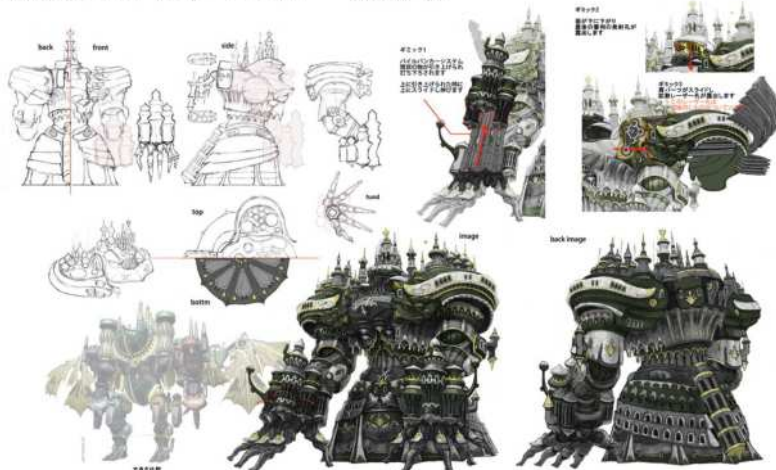
"The planning team asked me to give Alexander legs, and I had already designed an Alexander Prime with legs, but it was rejected. So when I accepted the request, they wanted me to transform Brute Justice and Cruise Chaser, and merge the two together."

Work backwards

"In the past, when I designed Summons in Final Fantasy XIII and figures based on transformation/combining elements such as Brute Justice, the methodology that I employed was to 'design backwards from after the transformation'. I couldn't use the same technique for Perfect Alexander, and I had no choice but to take the safe road and make the Cruise Chaser plug into the body to form the head."

3.4ボス_アレキサンダープライム

2016/3/14 塚本



5.1パーフェクトアレキサンダー(絶)

2019/3/5 塚本

変形プロセスを重視してください、プロセスの邪魔になるデザインは無視し変形完成状態でバランスを取る形でもいいです

カラーは変形直後は色が混じってる状態で、完成した後、統一させたいです

変形内部のデザインは後から追加いたします

image



back

front



アレキサンダー合体ロボ

2015/6/11 塚本



Designing transitions

"As for Brute Justice, I ran out of ideas when I re-disassembled the transformed body and replaced the positioning of the arms and legs. To this end, a meeting was held to discuss the transformation and combining process. As a result, we settled on the idea that for Brute Justice would first be separated and absorbed by Alexander Prime, and the arms and legs would then protrude out from the body, which was suggested [by] the team responsible for in-game implementation. This idea didn't occur to me because I was thinking about Final Fantasy XIII Summons and Brute as a 'toy' of sorts, and as such I was thinking about transformations that would be physically possible."

Beat the boss?

"The rest was done on the game side. Fantastic model data was prepared, and the textures and motion added. The only regret I have is that I wasn't able to take on the challenge of Alexander Ultimate due to my shortcomings as a player."

➡ Namae-san, who says the design was kept more realistic to match the series tone of this final expansion.

"When [Naoki] Yoshida made the rough selection, he had a vision for the opening act of the trailer," says Namae-san. His words, she tells us, were: "a 'Warrior of Light' in a hooded robe is walking on the moon, looking down, and every step is shown in the shot, and then comes the heavy sound of clanging armour".

She continues: "I expanded on the visuals from those words, bringing to mind the heroic image of the Paladin in the Final Fantasy series."

TELLING STORIES

At the heart of Namae-san's approach is for concept art and character design to tell a story. "Each design is a piece of the world of Final Fantasy XIV, so the task is to create a design that visually expresses the cultural sphere and setting while incorporating elements that are appropriate for that piece. With each update, the world of Final Fantasy XIV expands, so it's hard to differentiate aspects of the game from the rest, but I'm very happy when I can express it well."

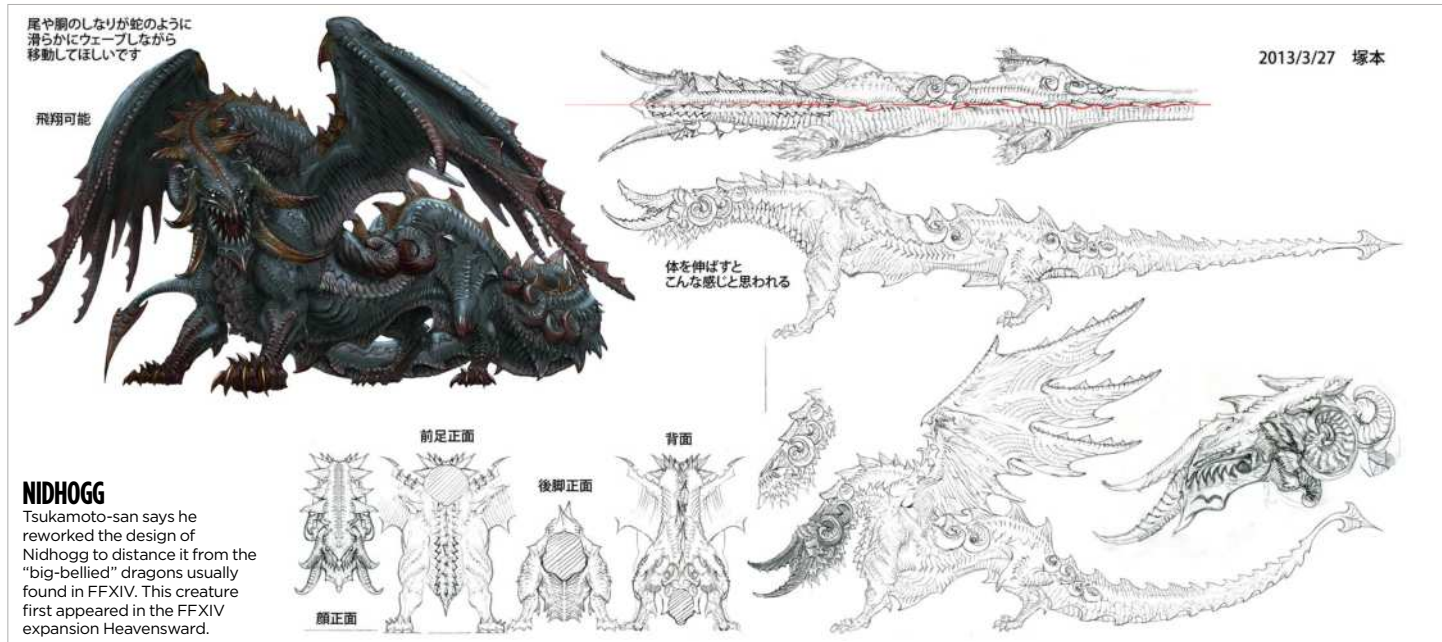
Digging deeper into this aspect or constant change, Namae-san explains

◆◆ Each design is a piece of the world of Final Fantasy XIV... ◆◆

how working on a game like Final Fantasy XIV that's forever changing and improving with live updates is both satisfying and challenging. The release cycle of updates is fast and the art team responds to feedback from players to incorporate changes. "I think it's one of the most rewarding things that you cannot experience for offline titles," she says.

Creating concept art for an online game comes with its own peculiar difficulties, says Namae-san. The sheer number of players in a game like Final Fantasy XIV, a record-breaking 67,000 concurrent players on PC alone, ensures there are many restrictions on the specifications of assets.

"There are also a lot of rules for players' gear, especially when it comes to the length and spread of hems, shoes and gloves," adds Namae-san, "so that they can be combined ➡➡



➡ without odd overlaps with the varieties of gear that increase following each expansion." Such things don't dampen the team's creativity, however, as Namae-san explains all "ideas are freely expressed" without restraint, and are then worked on to meet the needs of the 3D art team.

"Even if the design seems difficult to implement at the rough stage, the process of looking for loopholes in the specifications and devising ways to create a new impression is an interesting part of the work," says the artist. "Thanks to the experience we've accumulated with the 3D team, we have much more freedom in design now than we did in the early days."

EARS, TAILS AND MORE

There are more pressures on an artist designing for Final Fantasy XIV than technical specs. The game has a roster of immaculately crafted races and

KUGANE

This vibrant city debuted in the Stormblood expansion and is one of artist Saito-san's favourites. "It's where I was able to let my creativity run wild," he says.



WILD CREATIVITY

"It's hard for me to name a favourite piece of art because I tend to lose track of what I've worked on a short while after delivering them. If I had to pick one, I'd say Kugane, where I was able to let my creativity run wild," says Saito-san.

species, and each has unique considerations when designing armour sets, for example. Namae-san says complex designs for characters with tails and ears, such as the fan-favourite Viera, can be challenging.

"The opportunities to design exclusively for them are quite limited, but since the tail and ears are the most distinctive parts of the design silhouette, including proportional

aspects such as height and muscle mass, I try to design them in a way that makes the most of the characteristics of the race and the image associated with them" explains the artist.

In the case of Alisaie Leveilleur's costume from new expansion Endwalker, Namae-san reveals this is the first completely original design since the game's reboot with A Realm Reborn seven years ago. "So I designed it to take advantage of her ears as an Elezen," reflects Namae-san, "and her delicate, lithe, fairy-like proportions."

Weapons are given as much time as characters, and many members of the art team are often drafted in to create a new concept. Nouliths, used by Alphinaud, a Sage in this expansion, are new to Endwalker, and Namae-san details the process of bringing this new item to the game. Several young artists on the team drafted rough ideas based on ideas given by the "battle team", and one was adopted.

"It was a very interesting idea as a weapon type that hadn't appeared in Final Fantasy XIV so far, but it was impossible to implement as-is due to





the specifications,” says Namae-san. Art team lead Yusuke Mogi refined the idea and later, with the 3D production team and motion team, art staff at the studio with experience in mechanical design created the weapon as players will find it in the game. As we discover from speaking with Mogi-san and Tetsu Tsukamoto, this is an art team working together to bring fresh ideas to the game.

“Many staff members are involved in the creation of new weapons for new Jobs, but compared to all the new Job weapons we’ve implemented so far, the design of the sage’s weapon was more difficult and challenging right from concept selection through to incorporating the specifications,” says Namae-san. “Having said that, I believe the end result is that we were able to create a weapon that brings with it a fresh new perspective.”

THAVNAIR LANDSCAPE

Saito-san’s detailed design for the new area of Thavnair feels inspired by the Indian subcontinent and the Middle East.

BALANCED ART

Saito-san believes good concept art should be beautiful and also useful, saying: “I think that the skill of the artist itself is how well he or she balances these two aspects.”



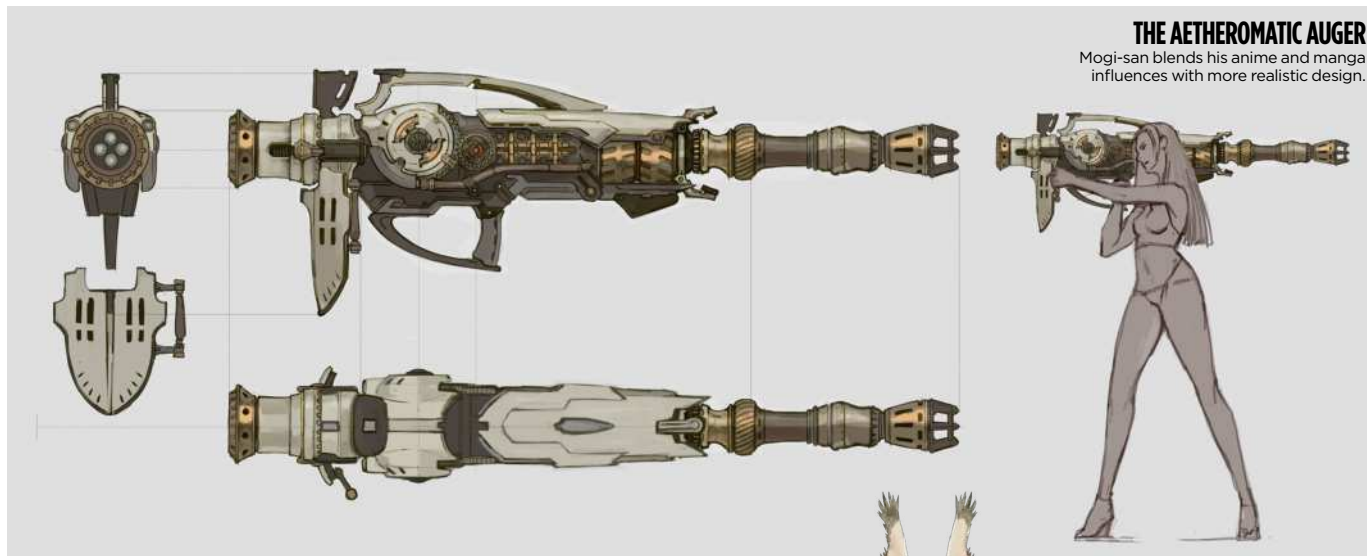
With so much work involved in every aspect of Endwalker’s design, we pose Namae-san one more question: when do you know a design is finished? Her answer is typically team-focused, explaining “design completion” happens when everyone involved is happy. On Final Fantasy XIV that means deciding on raw ideas, taking the idea into 3D and creating a clean blueprint of the concept. Each

team’s department signs off on the concept, and finally producer and director Naoki Yoshida checks the concept. Yoshida-san himself will often be involved at an early stage to look over ideas.

ROOM FOR NEW IDEAS

It’s a process the experienced character concept artist Tetsu Tsukamoto has become familiar with, but ➡

◆◆ We have much more freedom in design now than we did in the early days ◆◆



THE AETHEROMATIC AUGER

Mogi-san blends his anime and manga influences with more realistic design.

CONCEPT ART REBORN

Art team lead **Yusuke Mogi** breaks down his concept art workflow for Final Fantasy XIV: Endwalker



Yusuke Mogi says creating art becomes a collaborative process as he acts on feedback from the game's

broader art team.

"First, we submit thumbnails to the planners, concept artists, modellers and animators," he says. "After checking them, we get started on 'clean' versions of them. While adjusting based on the feedback and such, we'll make one clean drawing of the idea and a simple three-dimensional drawing."

Mogi-san continues: "If there's anything that should be highlighted for attention, we indicate them directly as notes on the clean drawing. If there's any movement, we discuss with the animators in

advance about what kind of movement mechanics are needed. To this end, a simplified diagram may also be included."

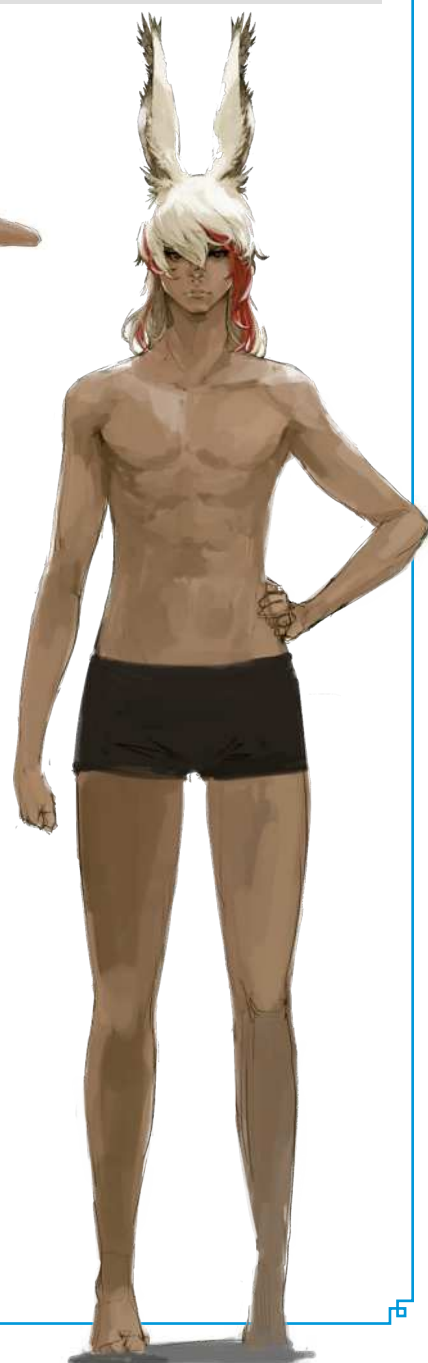
By following his workflow Mogi-san can prevent errors creeping into his designs that could slow down the animation stage. It's simpler and cheaper, he says, to make revisions at the thumbnail stage than in-game when models are being created.

"However," shares Mogi-san, "even after the face graphics have been applied to the actual model, they can often look very different in cutscenes and other situations. Consequently, it's often the case that we'll adjust the faces of characters and humanoid monsters through trial and error after they've been incorporated into the game."



MALE VIERA

Characters are designed to consider how players will use and modify them.



REAPER

The Reaper Job is new to Endwalker, and Mogi-san has had fun creating the shapes and details for this class.

➡ the process doesn't dampen his creativity or love of stumbling on to creative new designs. Fan-favourite creature Nidhogg is one of Tsukamoto-san's best, and it came about because the studio's process and his search for inspiration came together.

"When it came to Nidhogg," explains Tsukamoto-san, "I was originally requested to create two figures, comprising a black dragon and white dragon. However, even after showing rough drafts to my superior at the time more than a dozen times, I just couldn't get the greenlight. The thing that stands out is that in the end I got approval for the first proposal that was initially turned down."

He continues: "I tried to design Nidhogg and Hraesvelgr as contrasts, incorporating scales and scissor-shaped horns into Nidhogg, while placing fur and curled horns on Hraesvelgr. I changed the outline to distinguish them from the big-bellied dragons we had in Final Fantasy XIV thus far. The inspiration for those designs came to me by imagining that I was completely surrounded by their long bodies! At the time, I had just been transferred to the Final Fantasy XIV team from the old Final Fantasy XIII Versus (currently Final Fantasy XV) team, so I had a lot of ideas for attack methods and such."

Tsukamoto-san enjoys the workflow of combining ideas, styles and even previously ignored concepts. When he was asked to create a "cruel" Summon (the series' extravagant monstrous



RAK'TIKA GREATWOOD
The luscious canopy of this wooded area was a fan-favourite in Shadowbringers, and comes alive in Saito-san's brush-strokes.

special attacks) for Final Fantasy X, he took inspiration from a dark fantasy manga and anime to craft the fan-favourite Anima. "From there I studied the atmosphere produced by artists such as Yasushi Nirasawa and Takayuki Takeya," he tells us. "I found that both of the rough figures I produced had a good vibe, so I connected them so that one was at the top and the other at the bottom."

The artist tells us: "It makes me incredibly happy to see that Anima is being used again, with the appearance this time in Final Fantasy XIV."

A FRAMEWORK FOR TEAMWORK

The artists we speak with have a clear passion for not simply this iteration of Final Fantasy, but a love for the series



Y'SHTOLA
Fan-favourite character Y'shtola returns in FFXIV: Endwalker.

as a whole. They have a deep understanding of its lore, design and concepts, and are given room to create new ideas with a framework that encourages teamwork.

Reflecting on Tsukamoto-san's Anima concept, designed for a previous game, reworked for Final Fantasy XIV and created from imaginative references and guided by a broad and talented team, it's typical of the studio's approach.

Endwalker, as the name suggests, is the finale of the years-long Hydaelyn and Zodiark story arc that has kept players enthralled. "It's the culmination of everything Final Fantasy XIV has done so far," comments art team lead Yusuke Mogi. "From the diverse cultural cityscapes to the sinister dungeons, you'll be able to appreciate a vast world that can be described as representing the essence of the Final Fantasy series."

The work this team has put in over the years represents some of the most inventive in video games, and Mogi-san urges us all to play to the end. But don't take his or our word for how impressive this is. When all is said and done, let the art do the talking... ●

◆◆ The inspiration for those designs came to me by imagining that I was surrounded by their long bodies! ◆◆



EULMORE
Saito-san got into art because of the anime Neon Genesis Evangelion. "At the time I was constantly copying the characters drawn by Yoshiyuki Sadamoto," he says.

THE ART OF DUNE

Art director **Patrice Vermette** shares what it took to bring Frank Herbert's iconic book back to the big screen



he spectre of the infamous Dune movie that never was hangs over any production based on Frank Herbert's iconic novels, but for all the genius of Alejandro Jodorowsky, Mobius and even David Lynch, there's always room to create something new.

"It was important to have a fresh look," says Dune's production designer



and art director **Patrice Vermette**, who says he rewatched the Lynch movie and re-read the books, with a clear idea

this iteration would be different. A timeless, realistic and bold interpretation, Dune aims to draw on Frank Herbert's desire to take us to places we've never been, a universe that blends science fiction, fantasy, myth and historical influences.

The other creative elephant in the room was Star Wars, and nearly every other sci-fi movie that came after it. The first Dune book was released in 1965, and set the tone for many space operas to come. It was crucial for Patrick that this version steered clear of resembling a galaxy far, far away. Dune is a creative chicken and egg, and a unique puzzle to piece together.

FILTERING INFLUENCES

The Dune concept art team took inspiration from whales for the massive sandworms of Arrakis.



SIZE MATTERS

Patrice Vermette designed the city of Arrakeen and the film's sets to feel stark, harsh, hard and overbearing.



DETAILED WORLD-BUILDING

Patrice created a sketchbook of illustrations and mood boards; this eventually included pictures of every set, prop and costume for all departments to reference.





CALADAN

Patrice designed the colour palette of Caladan to be primarily hazy autumnal greens, greys and blues, giving the impression of constant rain.

HARKONNEN PROBE SHIP

Each house has its own unique ship design – the Harkonnen's are insect-like in look.



➔ “It was important for us to have a fresh visual approach,” says Patrice, who reveals he’d shown concept art to his son and asked if it reminded him of Star Wars or a video game. “We knew we’d be compared to Star Wars because Frank Herbert’s books influenced Star Wars in so many ways, and Star Wars was an influence on me,” he says.

WORLD BUILDING

Setting this movie apart from *anything* that had gone before meant studying the book and eking out the “clues and

meaning the city of Arrakeen is “the largest humankind has ever seen, which I don’t think we’re seen in the previous movies”.

Comparing filmmaking to being in a band, Patrice says: “The production designer is like the bass player, there to support the story.” His belief is that good concept art and production design should be “invisible”. Patrice takes cues from the script to inform his design work, but always with the mantra of “supporting but not overshadowing the story”.

“We knew we’d be compared to Star Wars because Frank Herbert’s books influenced Star Wars in so many ways”

cues” author Frank Herbert offers. It meant crafting worlds built around elemental descriptions.

Patrice explains: “On Arrakis the winds are 150 kilometres an hour, they can tear metal to shreds [...] so if I’m going create to a big city, I’m not going to have straight buildings because you’d want the wind to travel easily [over them] so I’m going to make everything angular.”

The film’s production designer shares how his team has stayed close to the book’s descriptions of its worlds,

For building worlds like Dune, it meant going back to the source material. Patrice offers the Caladan people as an example. In the book it’s a oceanic world, and the ancestral home of House Atreides. “Their culture, their economics, is about rice and wine and soy and fisheries,” details Patrice. “So you try to put that into the film, and with the medieval aspect of the ancient family tradition, and you try to show that in the world that you’re building in a sense of what you’re designing, so it becomes a real place.” ➔

CRAFTING THE COSTUMES

Costume designers **Bob Morgan** and **Jacqueline West** reveal the artistry behind Dune’s costumes



Working with concept artist Keith Christensen, veteran costume designer **Bob Morgan** explains how the outfits for Dune underwent many changes, from concept to prototype, “And we would

kind of hone in on what that feeling was and what that idea was,” he says, adding insightfully: “A costume is not an illustration, you can’t wear an illustration.”

This is the difference between designing a costume to be worn and a VFX shot. It’s what makes Bob’s role so interesting. The concepts he’s working with exist – they’re tangible and relatable.

Bob continues: “So when you put it on and turn somebody around, or they move in it, and you say, ‘Oh, this could be better or that’s perfect, you know, and you do find your way by distilling all the time, down to that thing, both in colour and style, and texture.”

An artist himself, Bob compares costume creation



DAVID IDAHO’S FLIGHT SUIT

A team of costume makers were hired and flown to the Budapest set to ensure accuracy.

PAUL ATREIDES’ DRESS UNIFORM

Jacqueline West reveals the Atreides costumes were inspired by the Romanovs: “They both were tragic, romantic dynasties.”

Courtesy of Warner Bros. Pictures and Legendary Pictures



BARON ARMOR

The Harkonnen armour was “based on insects” says co-costume designer Jacqueline West.

to distilling form and detail in a painting. And just like painting, a costume designer tussles with the idea of knowing when something is done. “Well, it kind of lines up in my head with the image that I’ve seen.”

Bob tells us good costume design is about discovering the character. In Dune this means finding the balance between the competing worlds; House Atreides, House Harkonnen and the Fremen of Arrakis dominate the story.

“Our challenge and our goal was to make each one unique, to reflect what the world was, and visually be able to see in a moment who each were [...] and we did that both in colour and feel,” reflects Bob. “It is wonderful

when they are so distinctly different. When you have diametrically opposed cultures and worlds, it does make it easier in some ways, and it does make it more challenging at the same time because you want to do something that’s fresh and yet believable and visually appealing.”

CLOTHES SHOW

Co-costume designer **Jacqueline West** worked on the Atreides look.



“I made them a dark bottle-green because it’s a green planet. They have water resources, it’s quite lush,” she says. “And so then losing it and losing their dynasty I used the Romanovs as an example for the shapes of the costumes.

Dune is a post-computer universe, and that ensures the designs have a

HISTORICAL INFLUENCES

Jacqueline West has a master’s degree in art history focusing on medieval art. Her love of the era is clear, in these designs for Lady Jessica’s entourage.

functional feel. Looking to history and modern culture the costume concept artists created outfits that were built around function and form. Bob reveals how the team looked at how people use wraps in the desert as wearable tools; the wraps keep the body cool and head wraps can be unwound to create yards of material, used as ropes, hammocks and backpacks, for example.

Jacqueline used the romantic vision of Lawrence of Arabia as inspiration for when the House Atreides arrive on Arrakis, but also looked to the Tuareg people of the Sahara, particularly for the shape-language and motion of their clothing.

“I’ve always loved how the Tuaregs changed shape when they’re riding their camels or are walking in the desert. And how instead of having goggles or something protecting their eyes, they wrap gauze across their faces, and with all the wrappings were just their eyes showing. I thought it’s so romantic.”

Jacqueline even had vials of sand shipped from Jordan to colour match with her designs, and create Tuareg-blue wraps to cover the stillsuits.

Dune’s iconic stillsuit, while fictional, also lends itself to science fact in Bob’s mind. The designer worked on the TV series From The Earth To The Moon where he studied how space suits work. The stillsuit, says Bob, has similar principles. “It’s something that recycles [...] In this era, this very timely era where drinkable water is disappearing.”



RABBAN HARKONNEN

The exoskeletons of insects and arachnids informed the segmented look of the Harkonnen costumes.



ARRAKEEN WALL

The city of Arrakeen is said to be the largest city in humankind's history, and the Dune art team were keen to bring that scale to the movie.

➤ While Dune catches the eye for its epic scale – cities the size of small countries, worms as large as towering skyscrapers – it's the small details in the designs that sell believability of these imagined spaces.

"Like the floors on Caladan," begins Patrice, "the texture and the way the floor tiles are on slightly different levels... It's fish scales; it's designed to be like fish scales as it's a part of their culture."

MAKING FANTASY REAL

The same approach ensures the more fantastical elements of a movie can be brought to life in a believable way. The idea of the massive worms of Arrakis are seeded in beautifully designed murals and teased in the film's scenery. By the time these god-like creatures emerge we believe they exist.

"It's a build-up," says Patrice, explaining: "For people to believe in the extraordinary you have to first set them in a tangible and relatable world, you have to be as precise and detailed as possible so that people feel at ease and think, 'okay, I know where we are and it's not too crazy', and then step by step you bring in the more fantastical elements."



It helps that VFX can put up on screen anything a concept artist imagines. Today Patrice tells us it's a "collaborative effort" and refers to Dune's VFX supervisor Paul Lambert as "my brother". It means as a production designer and concept artist Patrice says he needs to think in more detail. It's not just about designing a ship, but considering how it works,

FLIGHT OF FANCY

"My references were birds, insects and helicopters," says Patrice. "The design mutated as we started designing the world of the film, which is very angular and Brutalist."

how "the landing gear [and] wings deploy". It's about considering the next level of detail, "how the weight of a spaceship affects how it moves [or] how there's always those additional details that create the sense of realism, like how sand moves and shifts as a sandcrawler lifts off."

THE WORM

"Oh my God," exclaims Patrice as we ask how long it took to decide on this film's version of the awe-inspiring sandworms. After many concepts the team tore up their ideas and went back to the fundamentals. Patrice explains how he sat down with the storyboard artists to plan how these worms would be introduced, and look on screen.

From this new beginning the team asked questions: "How does this creature live? When it moves underground, how much of the landscape, because of its sheer size, how much of the landscape should move around it?"

And its teeth and mouth... "Does it really need these teeth? We see it more like a whale with these filters that draw out elements in the sand to eat. And then we look at the past of this creature, we show how it has broken and scraped itself on the world; its skin is

For people to believe in the extraordinary you have to set them in a tangible world



DESERT VIEW

Artist George Hull has described the spice harvester as "an intersection of a blast furnace and a desert scarab".



THE BOOK'S INFLUENCE

Everything in the film is inspired by nature: the light, the wind, the feel of the dust. Even these large vehicles look like giant beasts of burden.



➡ cracked and scarred. And then we looked at roots and tree branches [as visual hooks] and this took us back to Herbert and the themes around ecology. You add, add, add and then it builds and becomes the reality, and what it needs to look like starts to become clear."

The degree of thought and implied realism found in modern concept art for something as simple as a giant sandworm is incredible. Patrice and his team went so far as to consider the worms' digestive system. He worked with Weta's Greg Tozer on different diaphragms, and studied the muscles of the throat to create a believable creature.

STAY CURIOUS

The level of research Patrice goes into in Dune feeds back to his belief that good concept artists "have to be curious". This can come from all directions; Patrice says many artists working in films today have a background in architecture and design. Patrice himself bucks the trend with a grounding in sound design. But the



idea is the same: be curious about how the world works.

"I think it's mostly about creating moods that will support the story as opposed to creating design for design's sake," he continues. Interestingly Patrice says good concept artists need to be "psychologists" because when talking with a director you "need to

COLOUR THEORY

An early choice was made to never show a blue sky – on Arrakis, white skies are harsher.

understand what's really important to them so you can translate that into a visual".

Passion and hard work is important, as you'd expect, but Patrice says that you needn't force yourself to do the job. "I see my job as playing, I don't work," he laughs. This mindset protects you from criticism, as ultimately concept artists are working to visualise a director's ideas, and you will "become discouraged easily" if you can't balance your personal passion for an idea with what the director needs. "Ultimately, I'm there as a tool for the director," says Patrice.

The relationship between Patrice and Dune's director Denis Villeneuve clearly works, because this is the fifth movie the two have worked together on. Referencing The End from The Beatles' Abbey Road, Patrice says: "in the end, the love you take is equal to the love you make. And that's how it is, he's super generous. He gives you room to make mistakes... and it's super-important to make mistakes because that's how you refocus."

As Patrice reflects on working with Denis he has one last piece of universal advice: "Don't try to second guess what people want, just go for it."

|| I think it's mostly about creating moods that will support the story... ||



EXTENDED WARDROBES

The design team created 200 core soldier outfits and over 1,000 costumes for Dune.



CUT FROM THE SAME CLOTH

Discover how **Jacqueline West** had a hand in developing three key costumes from *Dune*

GOWN DESIGN

Lady Jessica's costume for her arrival on Arrakis has been described as the "most expensive costume ever made" by *Dune*'s co-costume designer Jacqueline West. Influenced by medieval fashion and the book's descriptions, the design features hundreds of hand-made chain links.

"It really shows her medieval queen glory on Arrakis," says Jacqueline, who explains how costume maker Bryony Tyrrell worked on the chainmail throughout the film's production.

She describes the costume's influences: "[These designs] are based on Balenciaga and how he took everything from [Diego] Velazquez and Goya but also medieval paintings. There's a simplicity that's almost spiritualistic to them."



CULTURE CLASH

"It was a real undertaking, because it required creating so many futuristic costumes without having the usual futuristic reference points," says Jacqueline.

LADIES-IN-WAITING

"We referenced the spice market in Marrakesh in creating their colours, so inevitably they became the spice girls!" jokes Jacqueline.



FORM FOLLOWS FUNCTION

"Everything followed the function of that suit," says Jacqueline, explaining it's why we see crossways running tubes and the external codpiece.

CREATING THE STILLSUIT

The famous stillsuit design needed to be tailored to each actor, and every suit features bespoke details and talismans hand-picked by the cast to lend their characters a backstory. Moulds were made for each actor and each suit took two weeks to build.

The suits were created by concept artist Keith Christensen, who had previously worked on *Black Panther*. "He was obsessed with the book," says Jacqueline West. "The first drawing that he did of the stillsuit was perfect. I mean, nailed it." Another Marvel regular, José Fernández at Ironhead Studio, was brought on to create a prototype of the stillsuit. "I love that guy," says Jacqueline.

STILLSUIT IN ACTION

"Herbert describes the undersuit as being a micro-sandwich of layers of microfibres and cotton that pull the oxygen out of the air for the breathing nose," explains Jacqueline.



Courtesy of Warner Bros. Pictures and Legendary Pictures

REVEREND MOTHER

"For the Bene Gesserit I use the Tarot cards because there's a real mysticism in Frank Herbert and I used it for Charlotte Rampling," explains Jacqueline West. "I used the High Priestess in the Tarot cards, and then I combined a lot of Tarot cards. The Queen of Wands, the Queen of Cups."

Jacqueline reveals she really loved using the Tarot of Marseilles as an inspiration, "which has a real medieval feel. I call this movie 'mod-eval', because I really went to medieval art and influences to create a world starting over in the future."

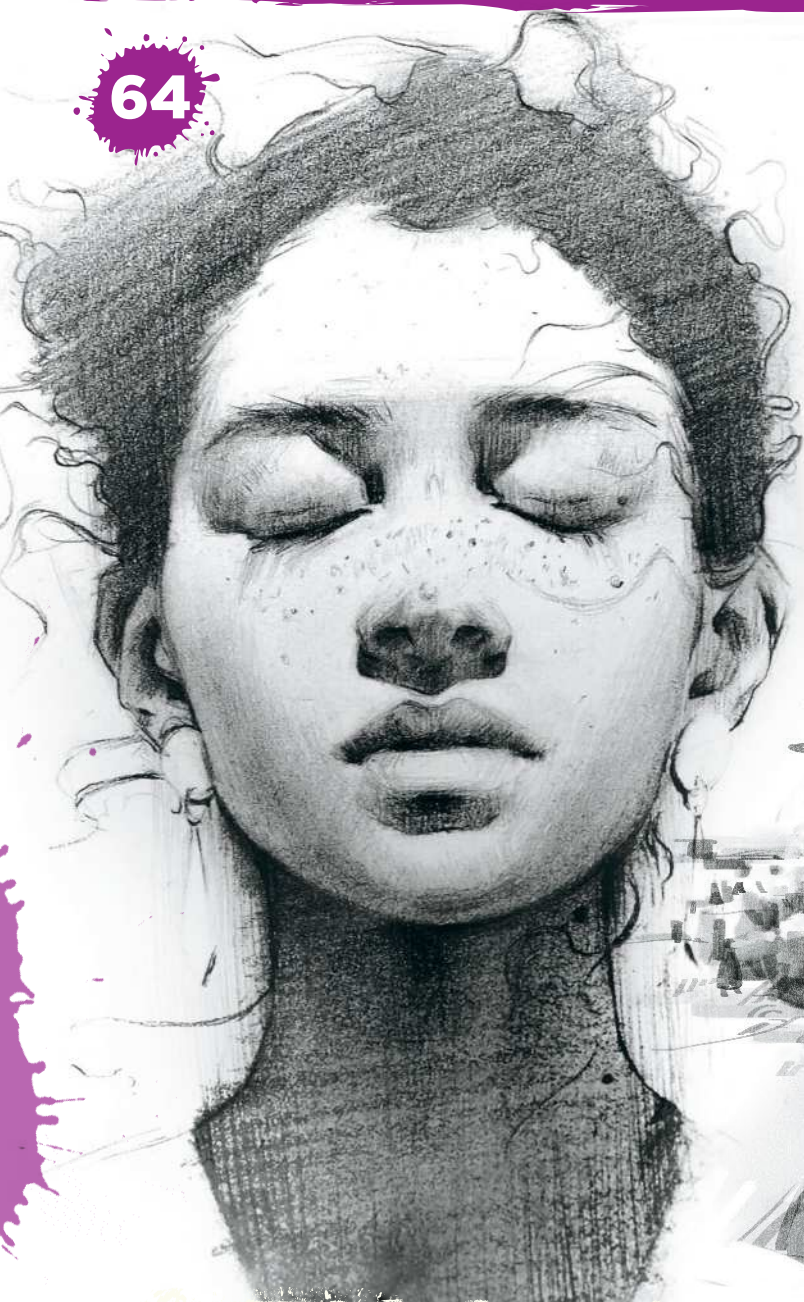


AUTHORITY AND POWER

The Reverend Mother Mohiam's costume is a mix of chess board design, Tarot, and a Greek Orthodox kamilavka headpiece.

Sketchbook

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64. Daniel Bolling Walsh

The concept artist showcases his portrait studies and talks us through the techniques he's experimented with

70. Entei Ryu

Discover the Tokyo-based concept artist's techniques and inspirations behind her amazing fantasy illustrations

76. Max Dunbar

The comic book illustrator shares his incredibly detailed Dungeons and Dragons character designs



70



Daniel Bolling Walsh

The concept artist showcases his portrait studies and talks us through the techniques he experimented with whilst sketching

POLKA DOT

A portrait study practising lineweight and accents. I got a little experimental and added some Posca marker to spotlight the profile.



BREEZE

Here is a portrait where I played with some more graphic ways of shading certain elements like the hair and neck, and leaving the details to the face.



Artist PROFILE

Daniel Bolling Walsh

LOCATION: Denmark

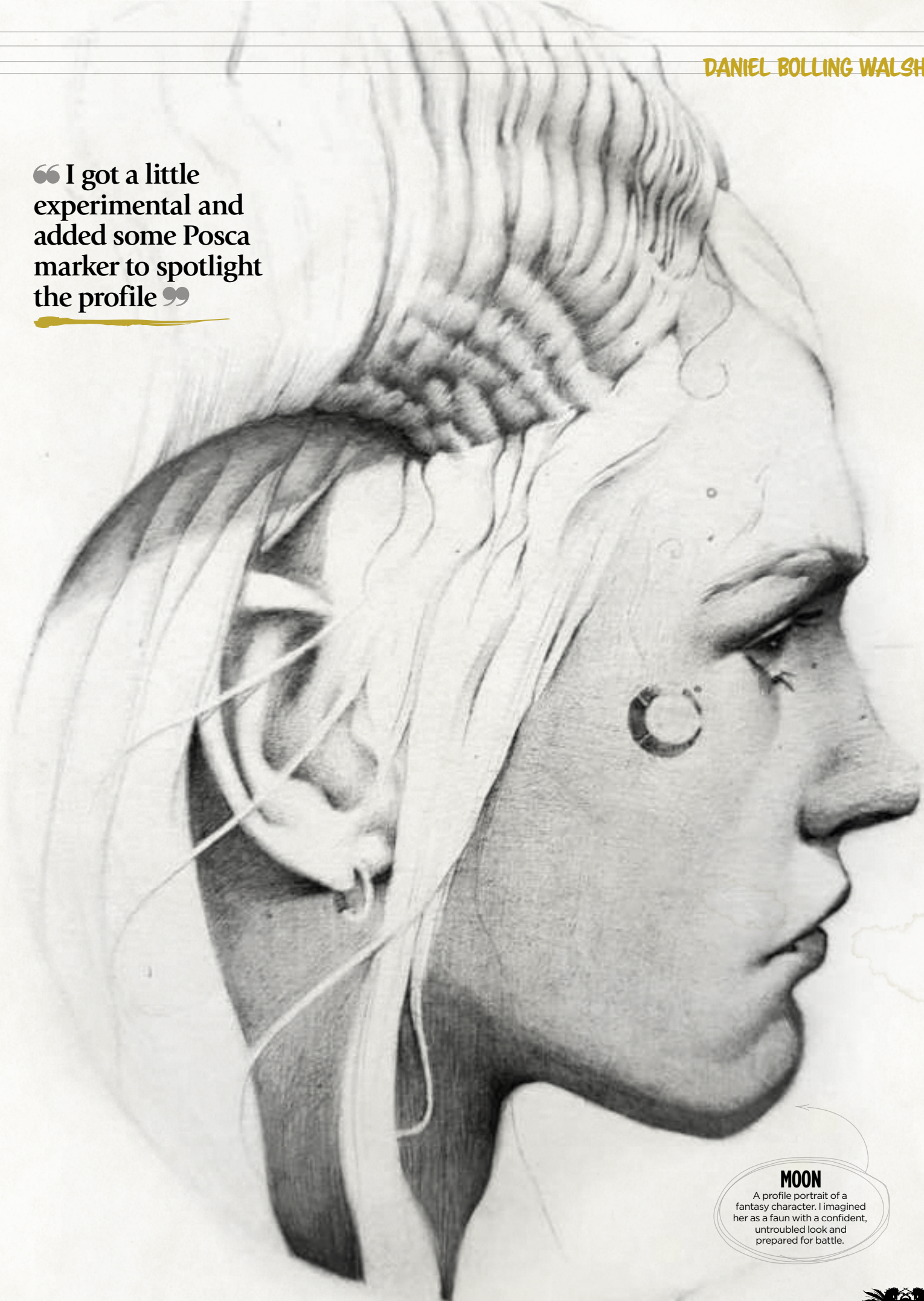


I have always enjoyed drawing and computer games while growing up, and Warhammer was also a big hobby. I grew up in

Sydney but moved to Sweden when I turned 21. I decided to pursue concept art and illustration, and I learnt a lot from studying at the Swedish Academy of Realist Art. I've worked as an illustrator on Warhammer novels and Lucasfilm. I currently work as a concept artist at A44 Games.

www.artstation.com/danielbolling

“I got a little experimental and added some Posca marker to spotlight the profile”



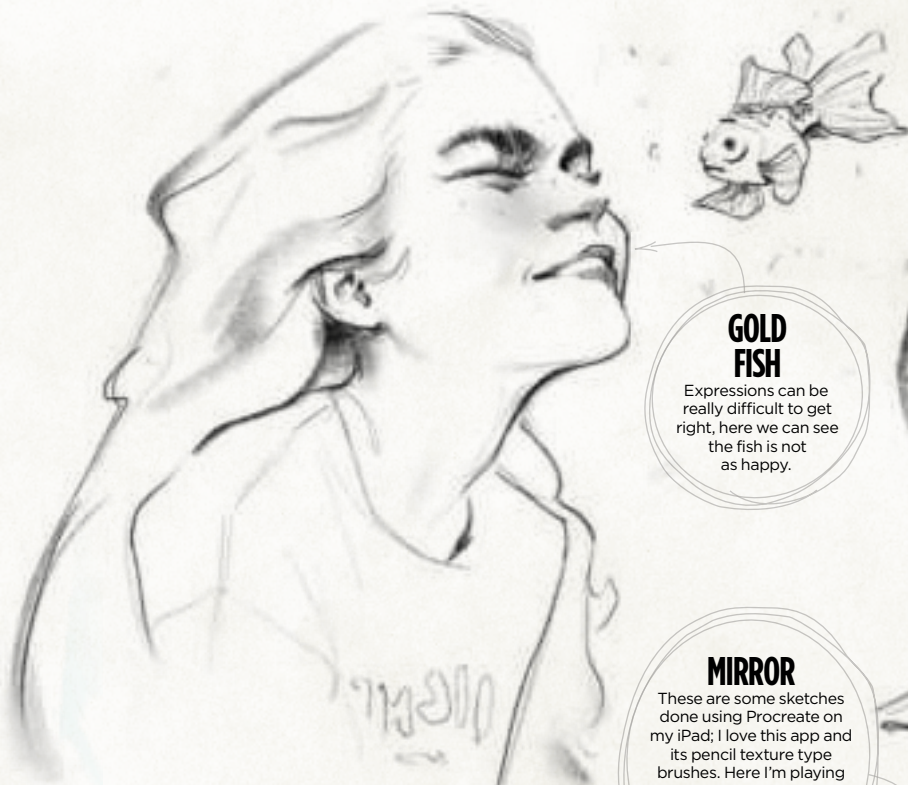
MOON

A profile portrait of a fantasy character. I imagined her as a faun with a confident, untroubled look and prepared for battle.

“Attempting to draw the features at different angles was good practice”

FACE STUDIES

A set of anatomy studies of the face that I did as a series. Attempting to draw and line up the features of the face at different angles was good practice.



GOLD FISH

Expressions can be really difficult to get right, here we can see the fish is not as happy.



MIRROR

These are some sketches done using Procreate on my iPad; I love this app and its pencil texture type brushes. Here I'm playing with some hatching style and using the pen on its side to control the thickness of the pencil stroke.



EARRINGS

I played around with linework in this one, making it much more expressive. You can also see some of my structural linework in the nose and the circular lines to construct the head.

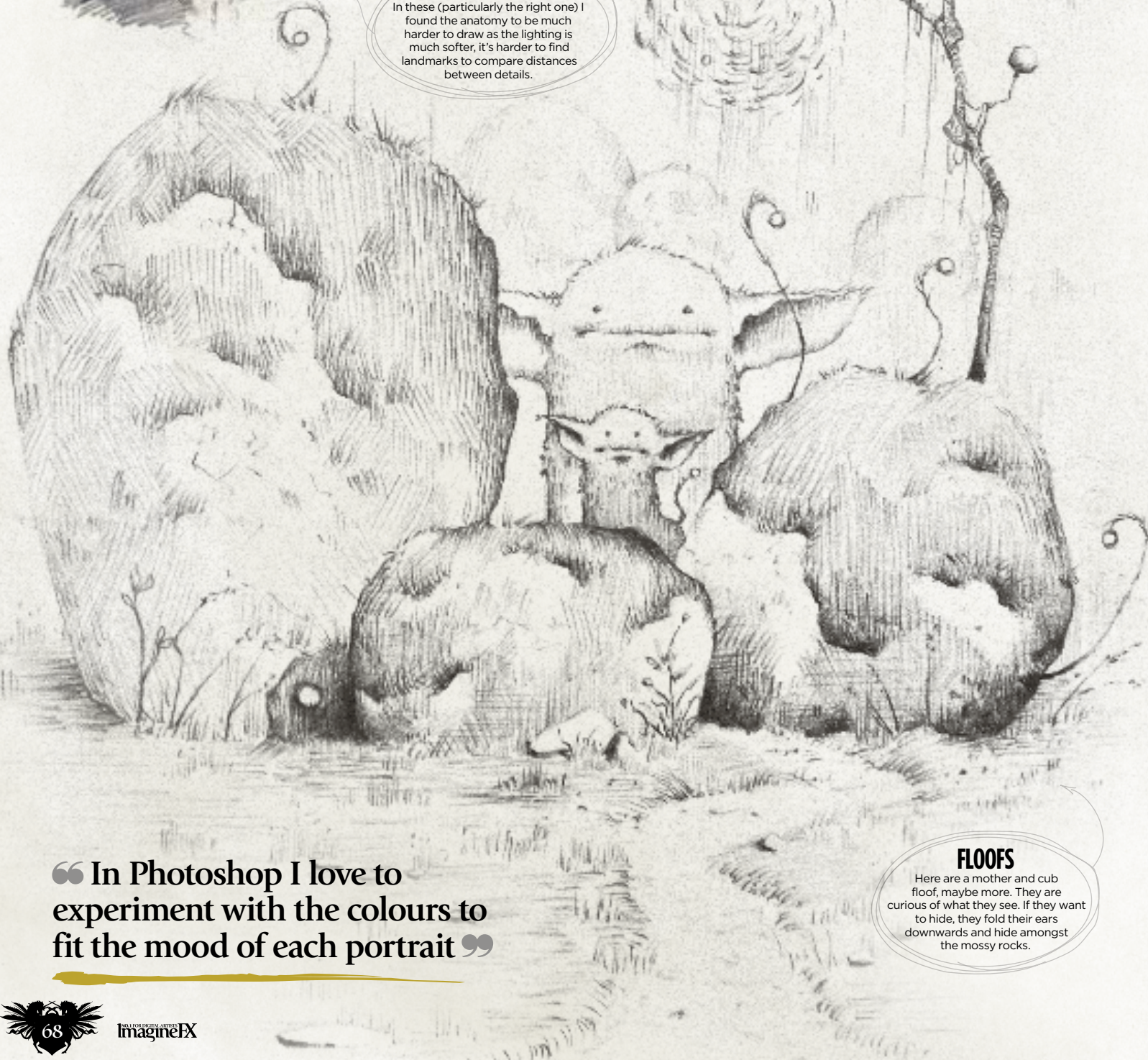


Sketchbook



SOFT LIGHT

In these (particularly the right one) I found the anatomy to be much harder to draw as the lighting is much softer, it's harder to find landmarks to compare distances between details.



“ In Photoshop I love to experiment with the colours to fit the mood of each portrait ”

FLOOFS

Here are a mother and cub floof, maybe more. They are curious of what they see. If they want to hide, they fold their ears downwards and hide amongst the mossy rocks.



GRAPHIC SKETCHES

These are some sketches done in Photoshop, where I love to experiment with the colours to fit the mood of each portrait.

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Sketchbook

Entei Ryu

Discover the Tokyo-based concept artist's techniques and inspirations behind these amazing fantasy illustrations

Artist **PROFILE**

Entei Ryu

LOCATION: Japan



Entei Ryu is a concept artist and digital sculptor based in Tokyo, working in the entertainment industry. After graduating from the University of Tokyo with a degree in architecture, Entei has worked for many famous titles of video games and movies around the world, as well as working on art sculpture fashion and jewellery design.
www.artstation.com/badzr

FANTASY WESTERN

Gold mining canyons floating in the air, mysterious legends, cowboys... no, dragonboys riding flying dragons. Drawn on an iPad with Procreate's round brushes.

ORIENTAL ILLUSIONS

Inspired by 19th century Orientalism, wizards in the Far East, old men and imprisoned princesses. I used narrative compositions in these scribbled sketches that can inspire me to be creative.



“I used narrative compositions in these scribbled sketches that can inspire me to be creative”



RAN

A collective of sketches with Oriental elements, mainly Japanese, as the theme. I actually start from a random corner and eventually fill the whole composition. I used abstract decorative lines and shapes to connect the various clusters, inspired by ink splashes.

PRINCESS SATURN AND HER GUARDS

A sketch with the watercolour-like rendering I am used to, while incorporating some sci-fi design elements. Instead of detailed mechanical parts, I used generalised soft and hard lines to distinguish organic and mechanic elements.

DEER CREATURE DESIGN

A creature design drawn for a serial in CGWorld Japan magazine in 2018. A jumping deer with a divine nature, the hair shaping is the fun part.



Sketchbook



SKETCHAOS

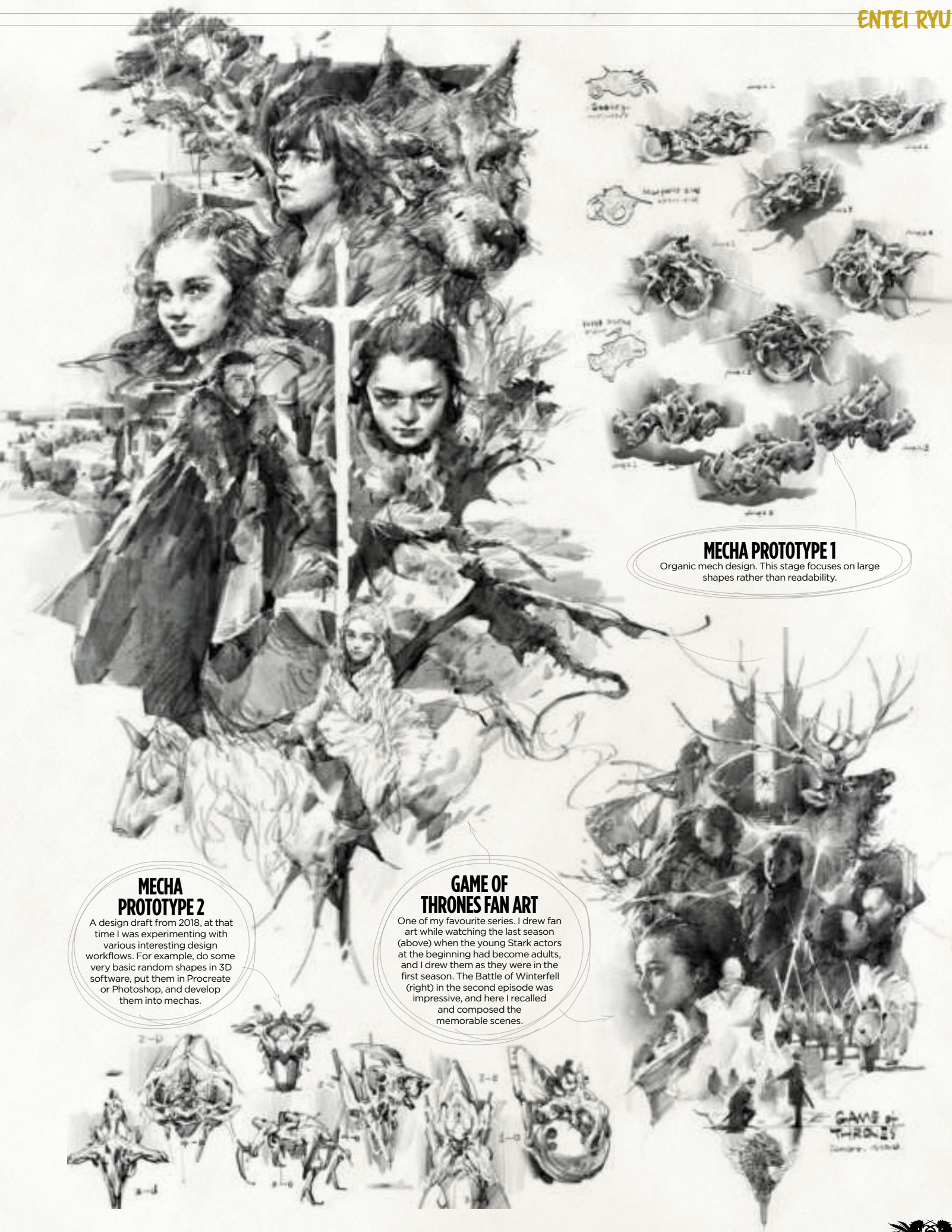
I call this kind of sketching without a theme, and just drawing whatever comes to mind, Sketchaos. This unplanned sketching process is more like a kind of entertainment, very relaxing.

CONCEPT VEHICLE AND RIDERS

Brainstorm sketches of a group of sci-fi vehicle concept designs, and their girl drivers.

DESIGN OF THE DRAGON MERMAID

The initial draft of my sculpture 'Dragon Mermaid' was originally conceived as a very complex and twisted dragon's tail and the upper body of a petite girl, forming a sharp contrast. After turning it into a three-dimensional sculpture, I also made the underwater tail. If you are interested, you can go to my ArtStation to see it.



MECHA PROTOTYPE 1

Organic mech design. This stage focuses on large shapes rather than readability.

MECHA PROTOTYPE 2

A design draft from 2018, at that time I was experimenting with various interesting design workflows. For example, do some very basic random shapes in 3D software, put them in Procreate or Photoshop, and develop them into mechas.

GAME OF THRONES FAN ART

One of my favourite series. I drew fan art while watching the last season (above) when the young Stark actors at the beginning had become adults, and I drew them as they were in the first season. The Battle of Winterfell (right) in the second episode was impressive, and here I recalled and composed the memorable scenes.

“I just tried to feel the atmosphere of the story: a relaxing way to create”

THE SONG OF DRAGON AND TIGER

Concept design for a Chinese collectibles statue company. It describes a giant dragon and tiger fighting on floating rocks. The contrast between line and point, big and small, movement and stillness highlights the dramatic conflict. The water and cloud elements act as support for the sculpture. It took me two days to draw this.

FANTASY COMPOSITIONS

I used fantasy characters to form a composition like a movie poster. I didn't think too much about the specific design, I just tried to feel the atmosphere of the story: a very relaxing and enjoyable way to create things.



GIRLS

Some sketches of female characters.



TOKYO SUBWAY PASSENGERS

Some sketching practice with references. The part worth mentioning is the line sketches, which I drew on my commute to work in the subway in Tokyo, to record people in their various states. I enjoyed the link with strangers during that time.



Max Dunbar

The comic book illustrator shares his incredibly detailed Dungeons and Dragons character designs, and the inspirations behind them

Artist PROFILE

Max Dunbar

LOCATION: Canada



Max Dunbar is a Canadian comic book illustrator and concept artist who lives in Vancouver, British Columbia. He has done work for Dungeons & Dragons, Hasbro, DC and Marvel Comics. When not drawing for work, he draws for fun, or hangs out with his wife Claire and their two cats Barney and Lloyd.

www.artstation.com/max_dunbar

HALFLING FIGHTER

Sometimes it's fun to go against type. This halfling fighter is unpleasant and a bit of a dirtbag, as well as being tough as nails.

A WITCH, AN OWL AND SOME PUMPKIN MEPHITS

Most of the time, I like to sketch whatever comes to mind or seems fun to draw at the time. It was Halloween and I thought a witch and some weird pumpkin creatures would be fun to design.

“Animal companions are a great way to add a bit of extra personality”



HALF ORC PALADIN

One of my favourite things to do is to noodle away on ornate armour, or all the extra little details on a magic weapon. I usually only have a very loose idea of how it's going to all turn out.

DRACONIC KNIGHT

Bust sketches let me play around with a character idea without committing too much time to the drawing. Sometimes a fun idea pops into your head and you want to get it down on paper as fast as possible.

DRACONIC WIZARD

Sometimes you find yourself with a whole bunch of time, and it's fun to spend hours drawing a character from head to toe. I love giving characters animal companions, it's a great way to add a bit of extra personality to the drawing.



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ELF VAMPIRE

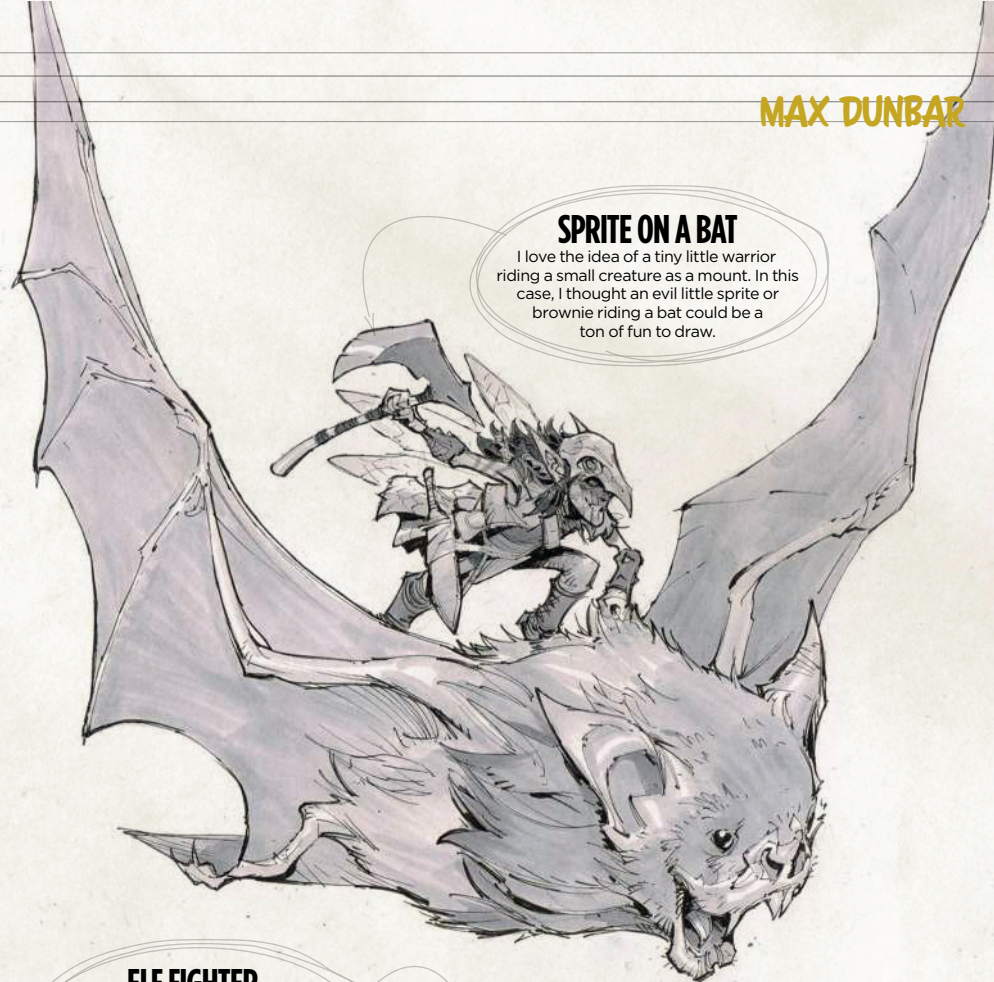
Most of these sketches start with a super simple idea or prompt. In this case, I think I just wanted to see what a warrior would look like if they had eternity to acquire the best armour and craziest weapons. Being an elf and a vampire seemed like a good way to go about it.

“Most of these sketches start with a super simple idea or prompt”



ORC WAR BOAR

I love orcs, and I wanted to draw a character on a mount. I think I settled on a boar pretty quickly... seems like a good fit.



SPRITE ON A BAT

I love the idea of a tiny little warrior riding a small creature as a mount. In this case, I thought an evil little sprite or brownie riding a bat could be a ton of fun to draw.

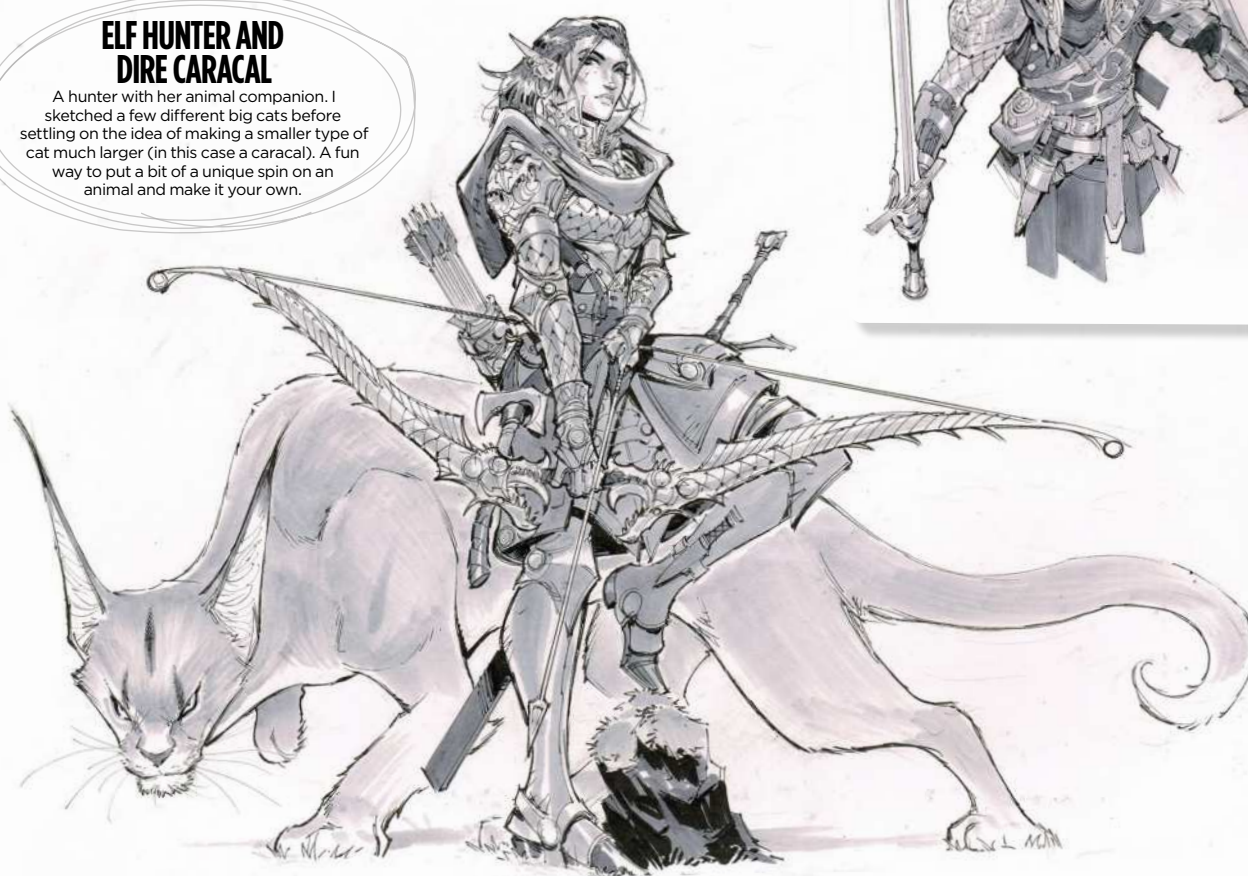
ELF FIGHTER

Sometimes I'll just start moving the pencil on the page and see what starts taking shape. I think it's a great way of finding out what you want to draw if you don't always go in with a set plan.



ELF HUNTER AND DIRE CARACAL

A hunter with her animal companion. I sketched a few different big cats before settling on the idea of making a smaller type of cat much larger (in this case a caracal). A fun way to put a bit of a unique spin on an animal and make it your own.



Sketchbook

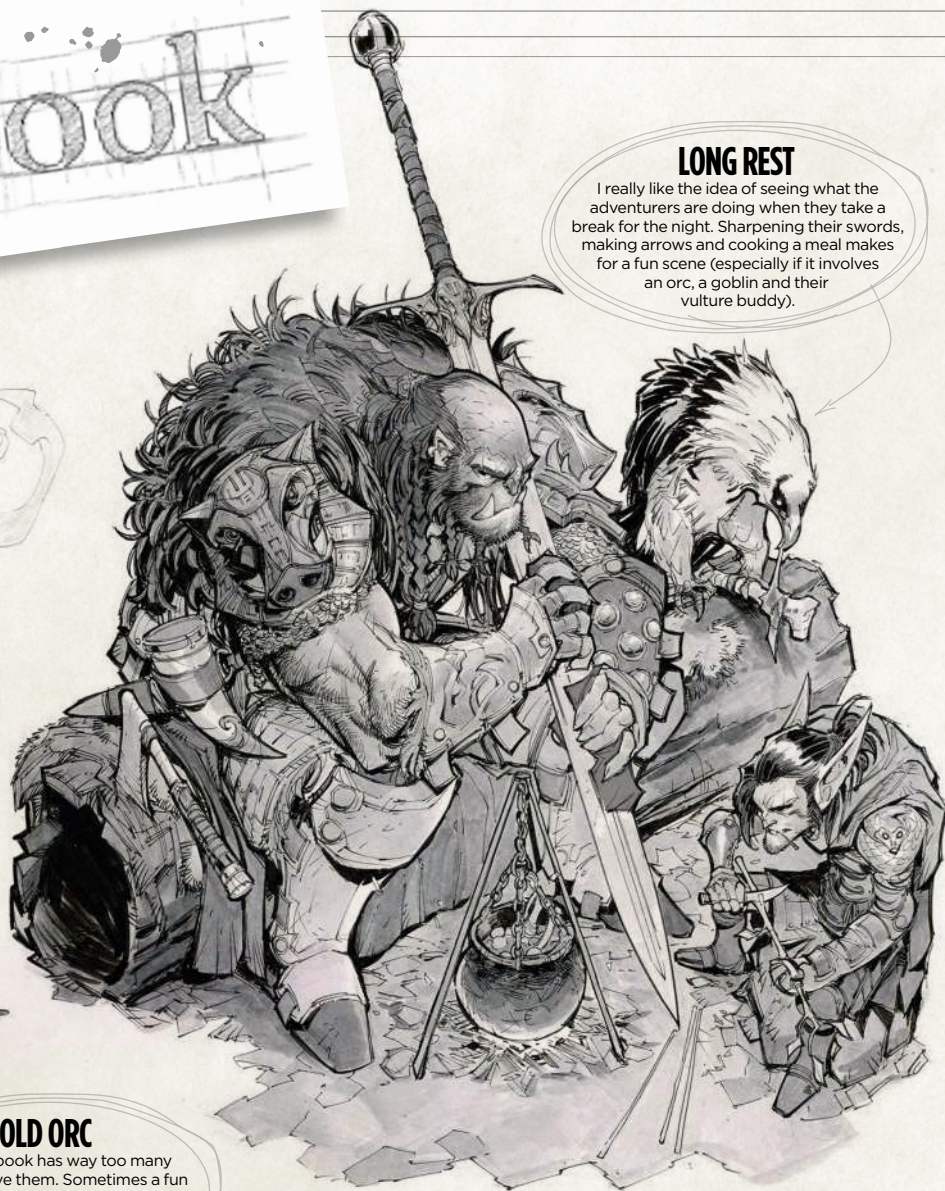
DWARF MONSTER HUNTER

I love dwarves, and I really enjoy trying different, slightly unexpected character designs with them. A more sophisticated swordsman was a fun angle to sketch out.



LONG REST

I really like the idea of seeing what the adventurers are doing when they take a break for the night. Sharpening their swords, making arrows and cooking a meal makes for a fun scene (especially if it involves an orc, a goblin and their vulture buddy).



OLD ORC

My sketchbook has way too many orcs in it. I love them. Sometimes a fun angle for a shot pops into your head (in this case looking over the shoulder). Drawings like this usually go a lot faster with less erasing.



HUMAN FIGHTER

Sometimes you just get an inkling to draw an angry-looking guy holding a couple of weapons. Sometimes it's that simple.



VAMPIRE WEREWOLF

Once in a while I'll get an idea or a visual will pop into my head and it will take a couple of tries before I can figure it out. I thought a mix of a vampire and a werewolf could make for an interesting-looking character, especially if he was decked out in crazy armour.

ORC AND RAVEN

My love of orcs continues, as does my animal companion obsession. I love the idea of a grizzled orc knight travelling the land with his eldritch raven friend.



“My sketchbook has way too many orcs in it. I love them”

HALDAR THE DWARF WIZARD AND BRISBEE

My D&D character! Haldar is a disgusting, strange character who collects a lot of odd monster parts and relics. He's been cursed multiple times, so he doesn't look or smell too great. Brisbee is his fiendish owl familiar.



Workshops

84. Sharpen your character art

Discover how Christophe Young sketches, lines and paints a compelling concept of a dieselpunk samurai character

90. Paint unique environments

Illustrator Alayna Danner shares her method of creating an epic and engaging fantasy landscape using Photoshop

96. Create retro art from 3D scans

Ken Coleman mixes scanned action figures and digital painting to create 80s-inspired fantasy production art

100. Improve your boss designs

Tristan Tait takes you through some different processes and design ideas that go into creating a boss character for a 2D indie game

106. Draw stylised comic panel art

Igor Wolski orchestrates a range of characters to tell a story in a busy, detailed scene done in the ligne claire style

112. Create a mixed-genre character

Dave Greco showcases the key techniques behind the creation of a collaborative original character

116. Create your own comic

Digital artist Rebekka Hearl teaches us the basics of producing a comic series, for web and for print, in Clip Studio Paint

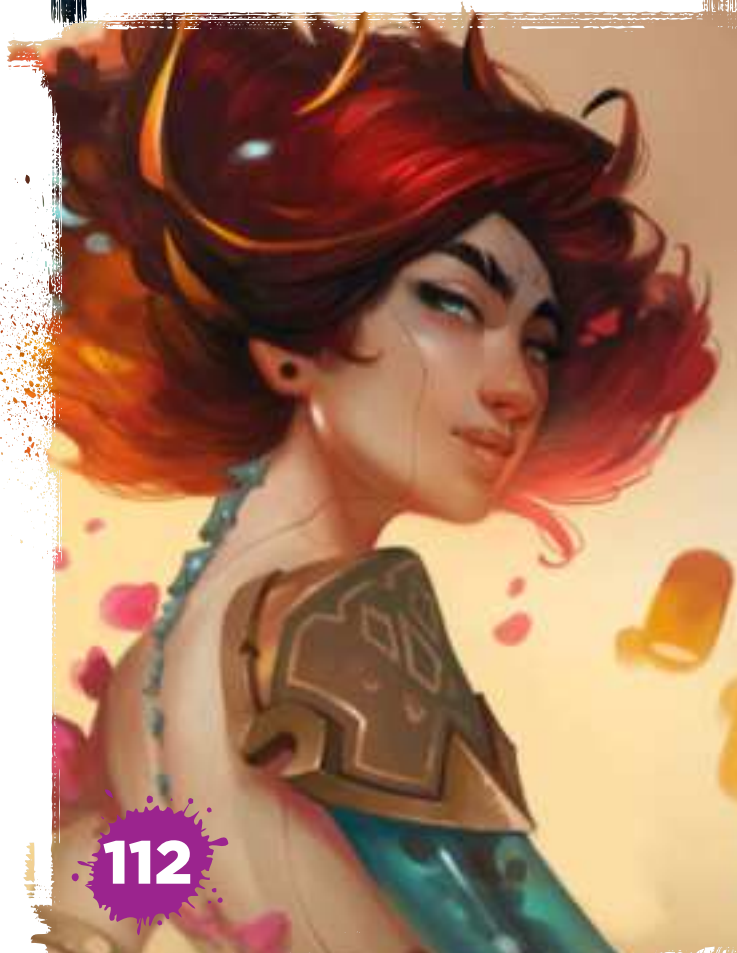
122. Create a fantasy illustration

Twin artists Raide and Leffie reveal how they collaborated on a delightful scene inspired by their childhood art

126. Create striking anime-style art

Explore one of the methods art director Tonton Revolver uses to make a kickass, anime-inspired illustration





Photoshop SHARPEN YOUR CHARACTER ART



Discover how **Christophe Young** sketches, lines and paints a compelling concept of a dieselpunk samurai character

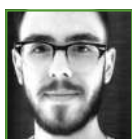
Artist PROFILE

Christophe Young
LOCATION: Canada

Christophe is a professional concept artist and illustrator working in the video game industry.
ifxm.ag/c-young

**GET YOUR
RESOURCES**

See page 7 now!



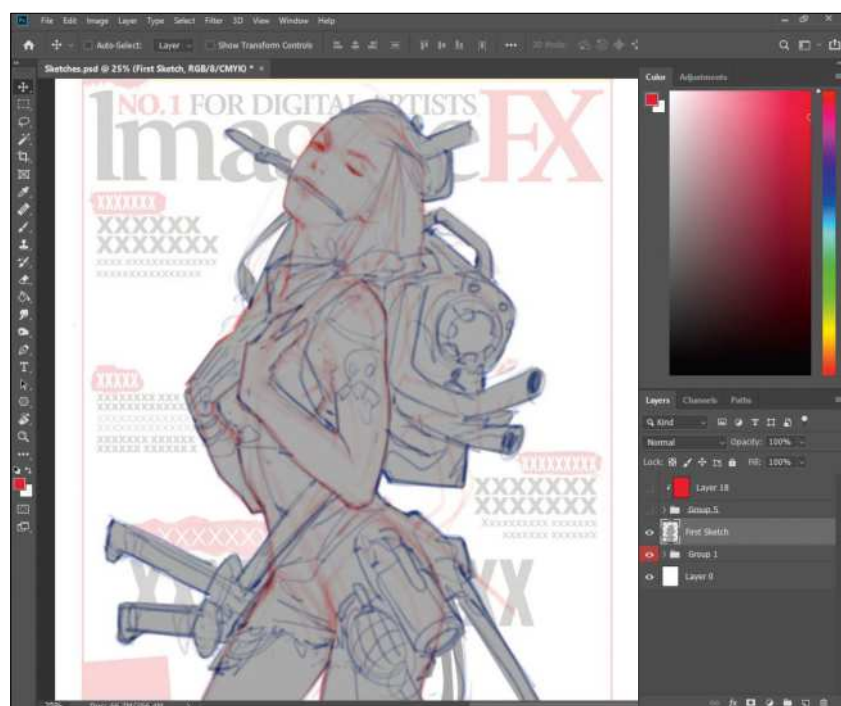
As a professional concept artist, I design and illustrate complex video game characters on a daily basis. As a disclaimer, properly building up to this level of complexity takes time and practice, so don't be discouraged if the first try flops!

Throughout this workshop, I'll give some insight into my design and illustration process to build a complex and believable fantasy character. Bear in mind that I won't be going into the specifics of

anatomy, perspective, structure, gesture, or composition, but having a strong foundation in these will help a lot in creating a dynamic and balanced image. I strongly believe that the success of a character illustration heavily relies on a strong basic gesture and good underlying anatomy.

With this in mind, I'll demonstrate how to layer on costume elements, props, weapons and a sympathetic facial expression to create a relatable character. I imagine this character as being particularly cheeky and

cunning, so we'll try to sell that personality in the way we draw the portrait. Moreover, I'll walk you through the colouring and lighting process when rendering the character. We'll briefly touch on skin tones, colour harmony, and material properties to create the illusion of realism. Finally, I'll walk you through the last clean up stages of the illustration. Finishing strong is just as important as rigorous planning and a strong initial sketch, so don't flake on the finishing touches! Let's get into it!



1 Explore poses in the initial sketch

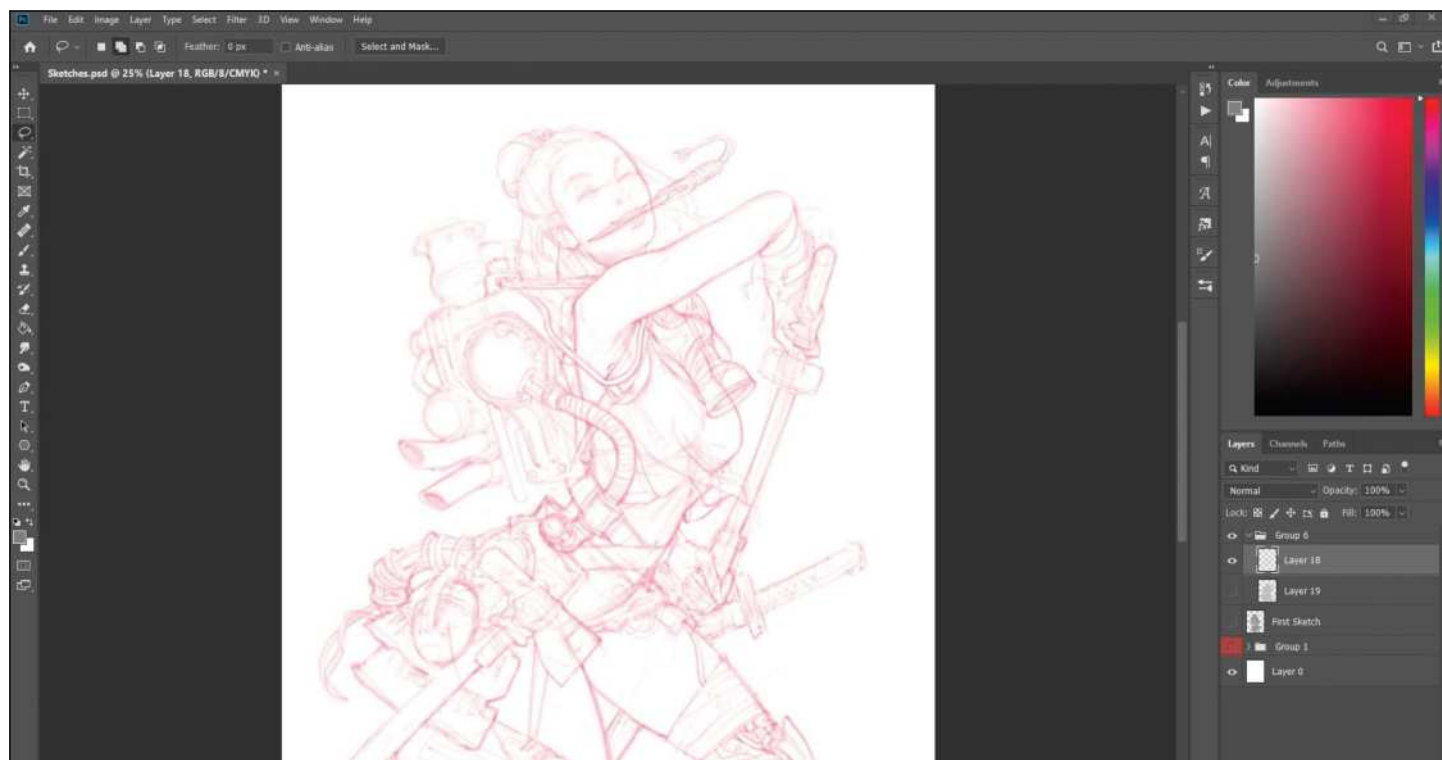
In this first sketch, my main focus is to explore different pose options to propose to the editor. Because it's a cover, I try three or four variations to see how the composition works with the title and placeholder text. I also play with different thematics to drive the design in the second sketch stage. This was the third version, exploring a female dieselpunk, samurai-inspired character.



2 Second sketch stage

With the notes from the editor, I restart my sketch. I prefer to restart on a clean slate rather than fiddling with my messy first sketch. This time I take care to draw a nice gesture with proper proportions and anatomy. I change the arms to create a more dynamic pose and block in the diesel generator on her back. These elements will make a strong base for a complex design. ➡➡





3 Layering complexity to strengthen the design

With the base design drawn, I layer costume elements and props to push the design as far as I can. I try to keep in mind the main gesture lines to place the elements in a way that complements the pose and accentuates the silhouette. I'm also planning ahead where to have areas of rest and areas of details, which helps to create a balanced image.

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: SOFT ROUND

My all-purpose sketching and painting brush. Very flexible by varying the hardness and size.

DOTS

Used to add subtle texture to areas like specular highlights on skin and fabrics.

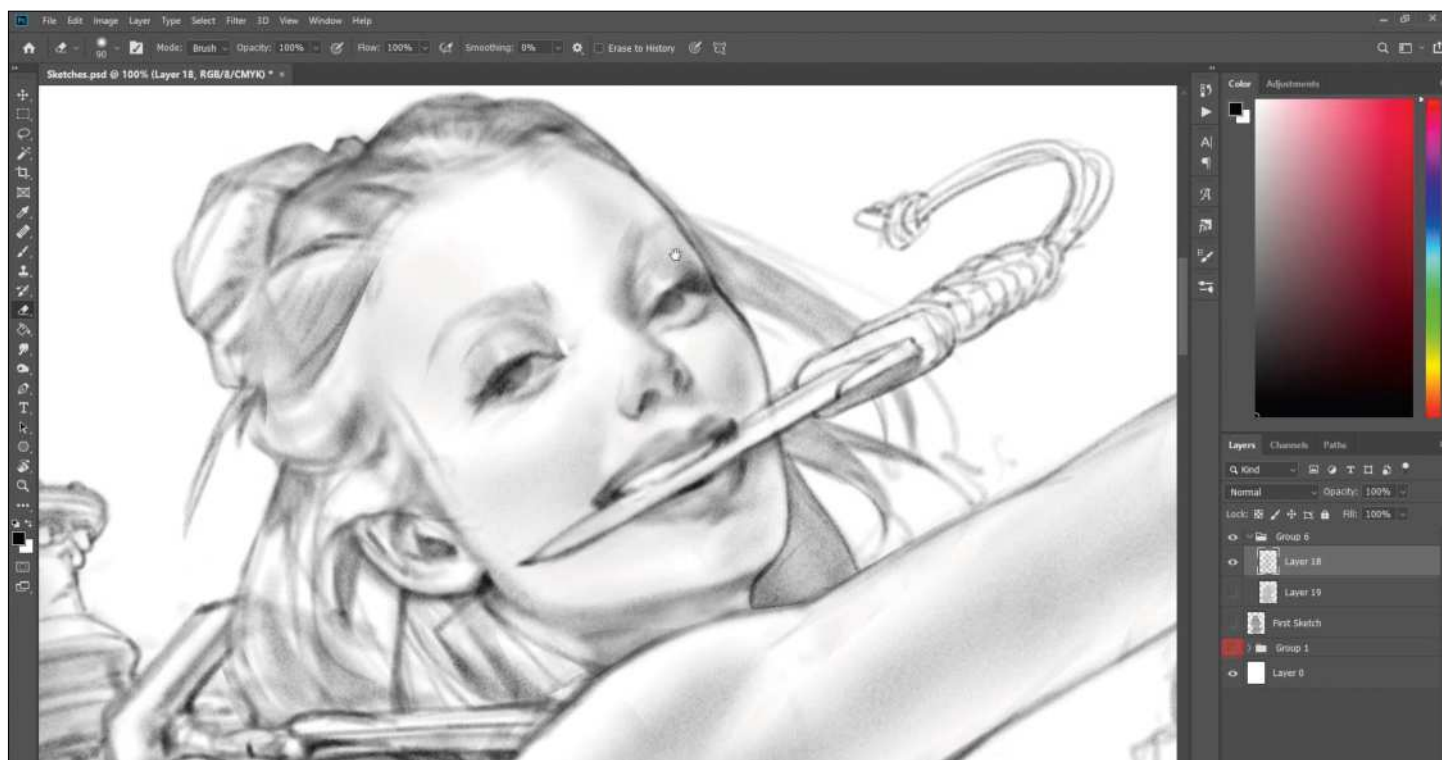
RAKE

I love to use this brush for hair and other stringy materials. Creates cool, flowing brush strokes.



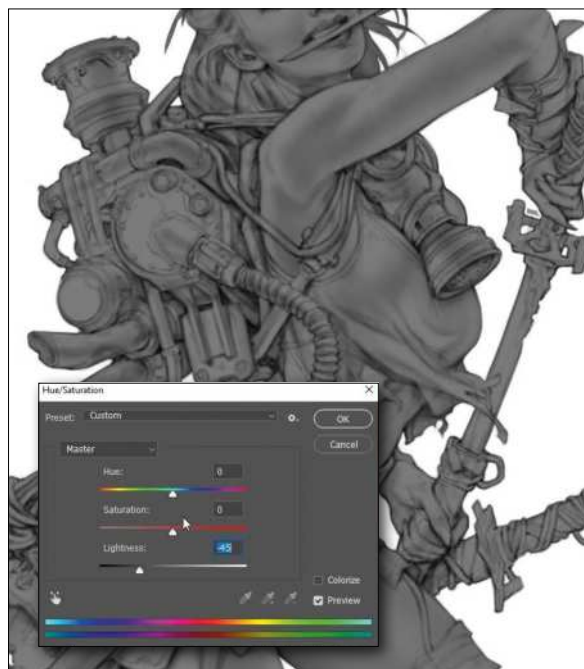
4 Refining the drawing

In this stage, all the elements have been roughed in. I zoom in one step to refine areas I know I'll need help with when painting. For example, these mechanical parts on her back are always tricky to paint well if the design isn't clear in the drawing, so I spend some time fleshing out the different details to guide me when I go in to paint.



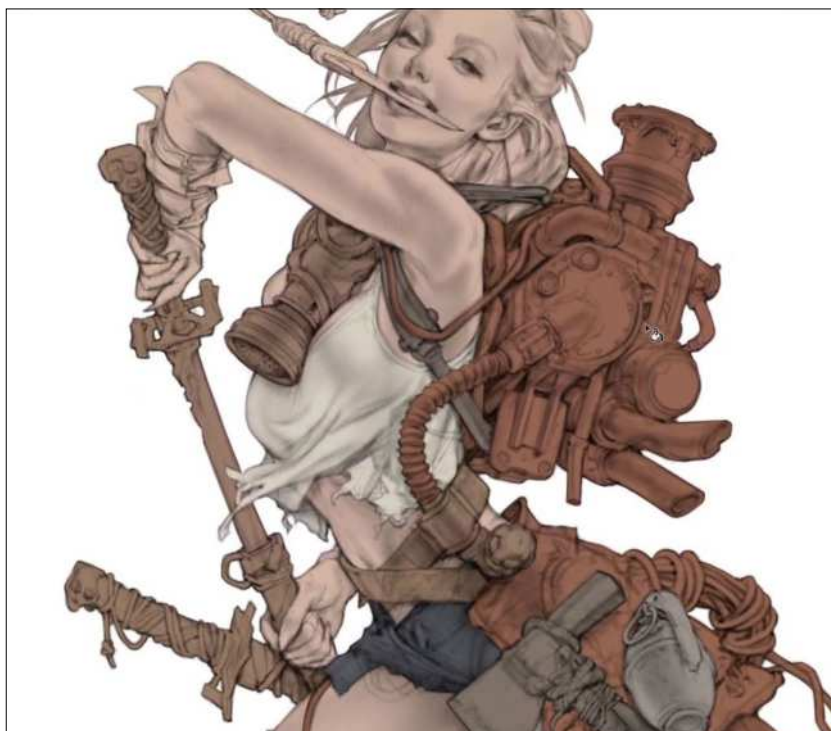
5 Fleshing out the portrait

I think the most important part of this image is the portrait, so I also spend some extra time in this drawing stage to refine some of the details in the face. I even plot some very soft shadows to guide me when I get round to adding colour and light to the face. I'll come back on many occasions to tweak the portrait and bring it to life.



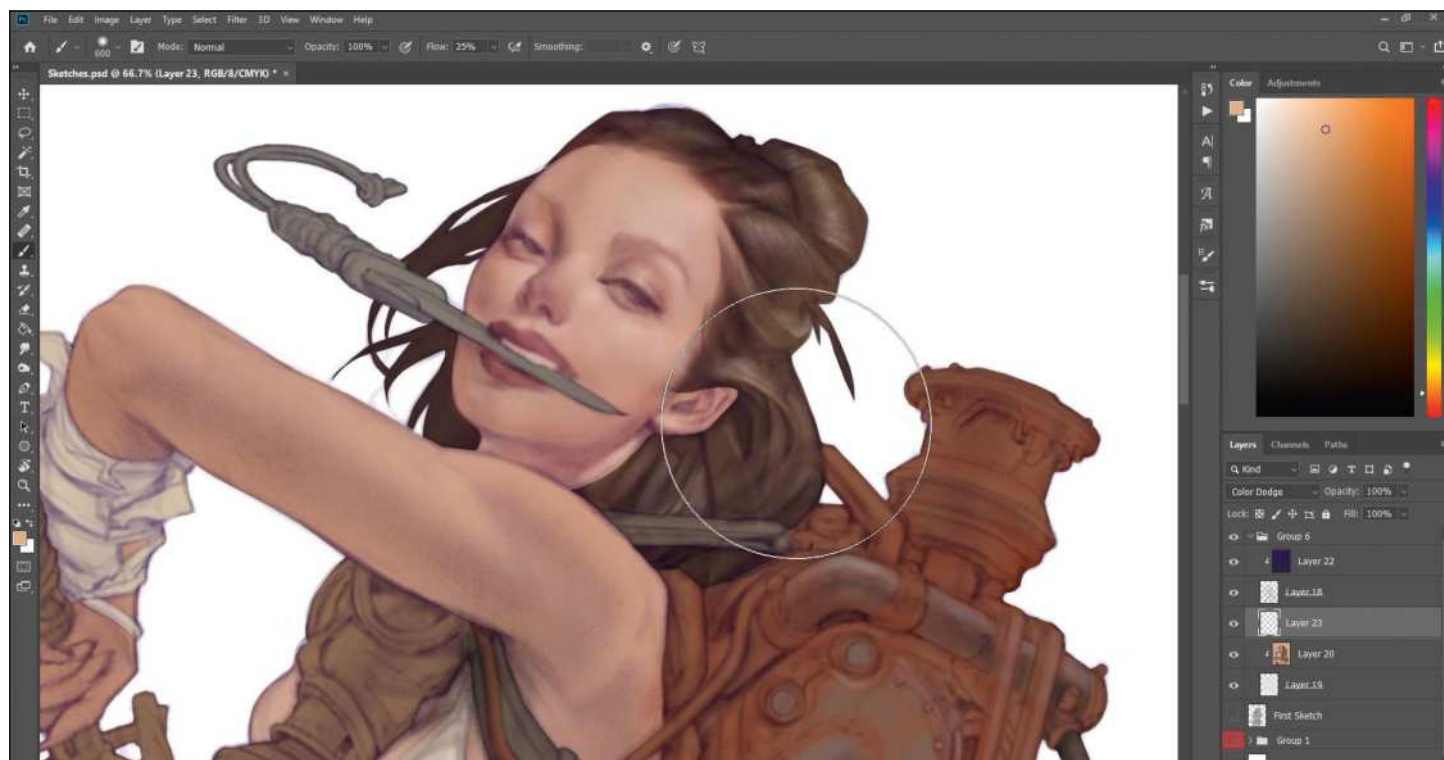
6 Silhouette block-in

Although this step sometimes feels to me like a passing stage, the importance of blocking in a nice silhouette is paramount to have a successful illustration. I make sure all the primary and secondary shapes are reading clearly, and that there's a sufficient amount of interesting shapes and rhythms to keep the eye moving around the character.



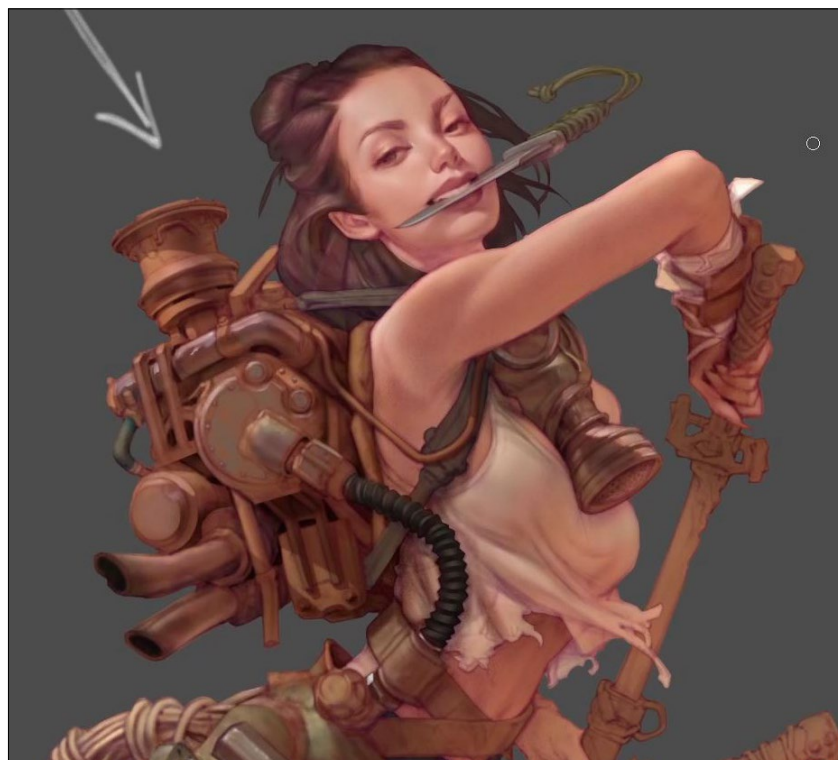
7 Apply colour flats to the artwork

Blocking in the major elements with flat colours helps me establish my main colour strategy and their hierarchy in the image before detailing everything. I'm trying out a very warm colour palette with a lot of oranges and sand tones, therefore my coolest colour here (the blue shorts) stays very desaturated to harmonise with the other colours. ➡➡



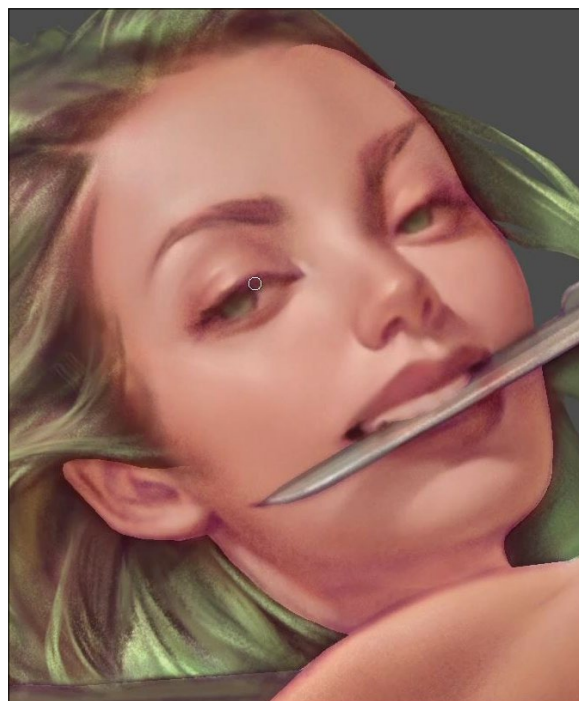
8 Select flats for the modelling stage

I can use these flat colours to easily select areas and start painting the general light and form. My main goal in this stage is to establish the light scheme and introduce a variety of warm and cool tones all around the image. If you look closely, there's a bit of a complementary colour scheme with purple-tinted shadows and warmer yellow highlights.



9 Lighting the equipment

Once I paint in the general form and lighting of the character, I duplicate the colour layer and bump the highlights using a Levels adjustment to bring out stronger highlights. I can control where they show using the Layer Mask. With this light layer, I paint in the sunlight hitting the diesel generator on her back.



10 Refining the portrait

I refine the portrait many times over the course of the painting. Here I decide to tint her hair and eyes a light green to complement the orange and red tones in the rusty metal and skin. I also zoom to work on the eyes, nose and mouth, being careful not to overwork them to stay in balance with the rest of the image's level of detail.



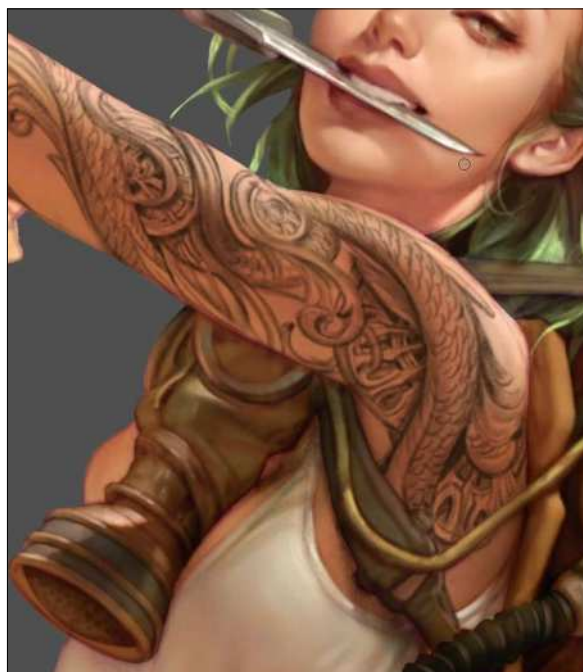
11 Make corrections

Once I'm happy with the colours and level of detail in the head, I make some final tweaks using the Liquify filter. These minuscule adjustments in the size of the features, how the eyes, eyebrows, and mouth are angled, and even tweaking the shape of the head, can really bring an expression to life and make for a much more appealing portrait.



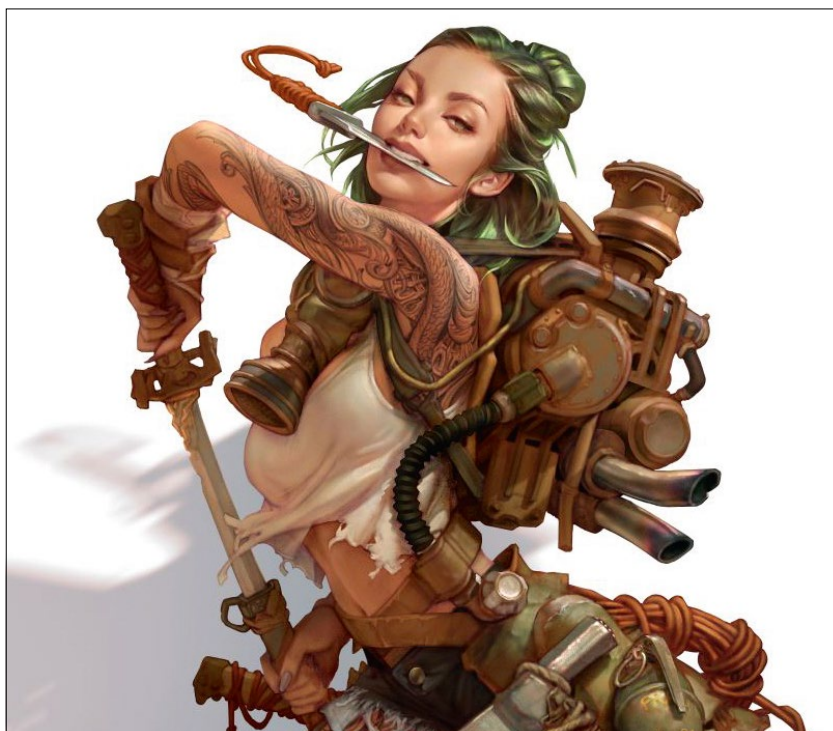
12 Adding details and contrast

I believe it's important to slowly build up to your brightest highlights and darkest shadows throughout your painting. In these final stages, I'm bringing out some of the brightest areas with sharper specular highlights. On the leg, I use a grainy brush to emulate skin pores that catch the light. This is one of my favourite parts of the process. My patience is finally rewarded!



13 Tattoo design

This also falls into the detailing stage, but since the tattoo plays such a large role in the design, I give it some extra time and care. I design the tattoo directly on the skin, using curves that follow the form of the arms juxtaposing some rococo-inspired ornamental elements for a sleek and elegant look. I also continued the design down her ribcage and far leg.



14 Finalising the image

After testing a few different styles of backgrounds, I settled on a more subtle drop shadow in the bottom left to let the head, leading arm and generator contrast with the stark white background at the top. It reinforces a triangular composition and has a nice graphic effect overall. Lately, I've been using more minimalistic backgrounds to emphasise my character designs. ●

Photoshop

PAIN'T UNIQUE ENVIRONMENTS

Illustrator **Alayna Danner** shares her method of creating an epic and engaging fantasy landscape using Photoshop



Artist PROFILE

Alayna Danner
LOCATION: US

Alayna is a fantasy illustrator based in Seattle. She's currently working on *Magic: The Gathering* and *Dungeons & Dragons* projects.
alayna.net



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Painting cityscapes or natural environments can be intimidating, but after a couple years' practice it's become my favourite thing to do.

In this workshop I'll be working on creating a new fantasy cityscape environment piece from scratch. I don't use advanced techniques – everything is rendered in Photoshop, exclusively using the Brush tool and different layer modes. You can use any version of Photoshop to follow along with this workshop, or likely any real 2D drawing program of

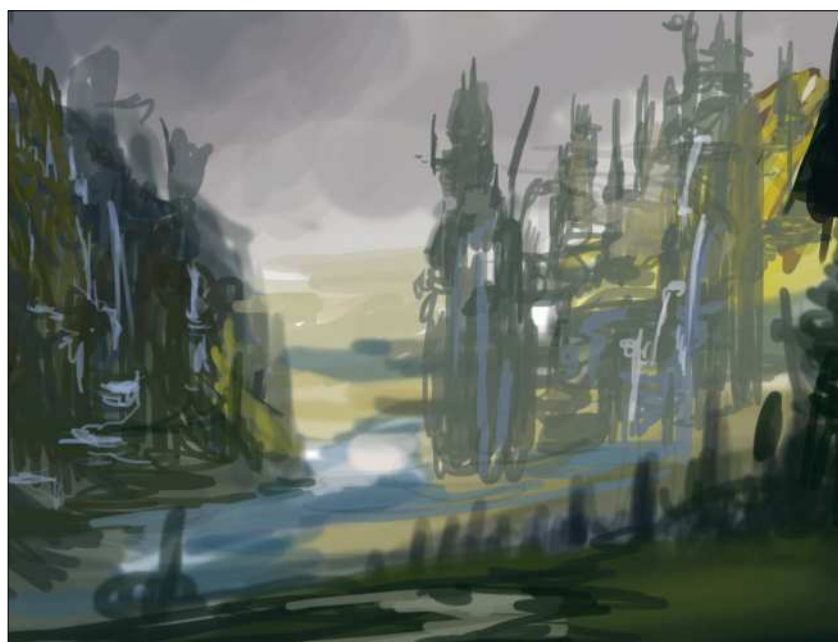
your choice, provided that the software enables you to use layers and you have a pressure-sensitive tablet to hand.

I use an old-school technique for creating perspective lines to define architecture, by using a horizon line and vanishing points. I'll explain how to achieve perspective guidelines in Photoshop and how it can help make your piece look more convincing.

I start from a simple inspiring concept and noodle on it, adjusting and evolving as I draw. I try not to stay married to any sort of look or

feel until I'm happy with how the piece is going. If you don't like how something looks then don't sweat it – just erase or draw over it and keep evolving. Try working this way to not feel burdened by needing perfect thumbnails, colour schemes or compositions.

If you're having trouble coming up with new ideas for a fantasy environment, go back to your original idea as it can help inform new directions to pursue in your piece. My idea was "city of water mages" and you can check out how I got to this final piece! ➡



1 Create a fun idea

My concept for this piece is “a city of water mages”. How would that look? Who would live there and how would that influence the architecture? I don’t create multiple thumbnail ideas, I just do one image that I continually erase and rework until I like it. This just looks like a bunch of scribbles in the beginning.



2 Reference, reference, reference

Grab photos of architecture, landscapes, concept art and paintings you enjoy, and throw them all in a folder. They don’t have to look like what you want to draw, just what inspires you. Here are a couple of example photos that I use, which I took myself. Overall, I gather up about 30 different pieces of reference.



RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: HARD ELLIPTICAL

This is an offshoot of Hard Round. I like to use this for detailing trees and other textured areas.

TEXTURE BRUSH 1

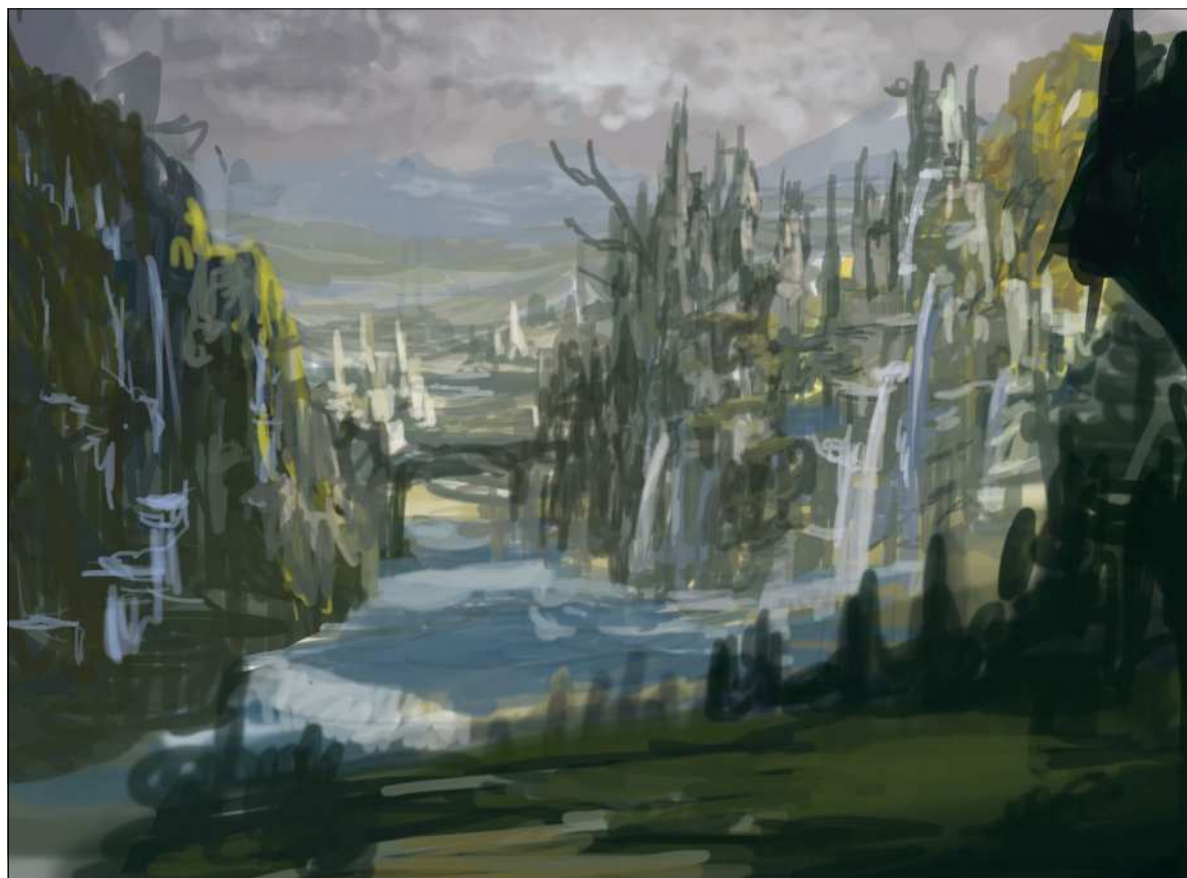
Use this basic texture brush when you’re starting to define rocky or grassy areas.

LEAVES

A simple leaf brush for roughly defining trees. I then use a basic Round to erase obvious patterns.

BLENDING BRUSH WITH TEXTURE

This brush is great for blending in areas if you don’t want to just use the Hard Round brush.



3 Keep sketching to refine your vision

Look at your reference and just imagine what a fun environment would be. Discard ideas that don’t work and try to focus on what is working for you. Different reference can help you decide what direction you want to take your buildings in. Maybe you want a more sci-fi look, or perhaps you want the city to appear more medieval?



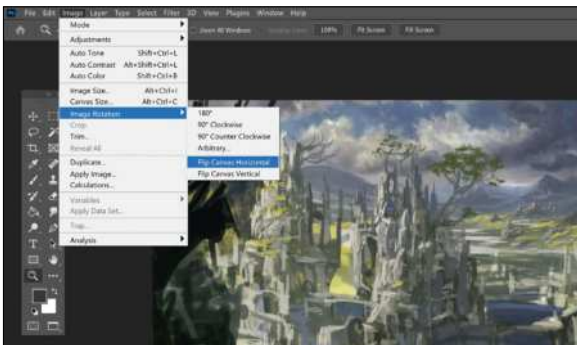
4 Keep planning and changing

Keep changing it up if you don't like the overall look. I change my sketch several times as I go. I prefer this to doing several sketches – just evolving one to a point where I'm happy with it. I add giant trees and foliage (that will later be taken out), but trying new things can help you make a really fun piece.



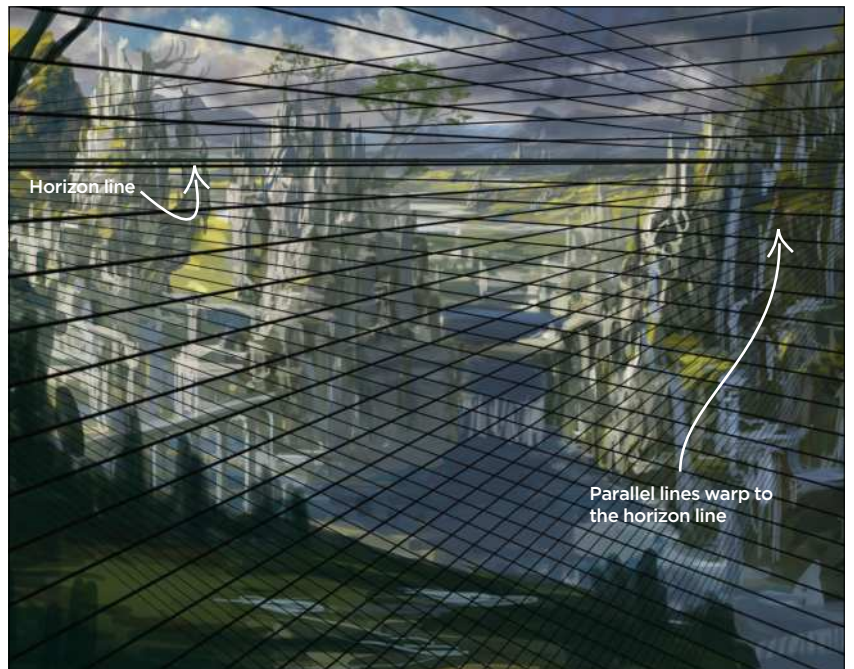
5 Evaluate your colour palette

Does the palette evoke what you'd like? Colours and light in both the background and foreground are important for what you want to say. I didn't like the cloudy sky and light blue mountains so I rework the colours of the background to be a more colourful. I think that helps make the piece a little more engaging; the sun is now definitely hitting the foreground and illuminating it.



6 Flip your canvas horizontally

This helps you to get a fresh perspective! You may see where awkward gaps in your composition are, or where buildings may be leaning oddly. Adjust, erase and redraw until you start to feel your city taking shape. It's around this point where I'm finally starting to like the direction this piece is going. To get a straight line, hold down Shift while you draw your brushstroke. It's very helpful for vertical lines on a building.



7 Perspective lines

Once you have a solid start, you can build perspective lines so your buildings look like they exist on the same plane. Make a new group and one new layer, and draw a horizon line. The line should be where the horizon of the earth meets the sky. Then drop in a series of parallel lines on a new separate layer. These lines will form your vanishing lines to the horizon line.

On the parallel lines layer, use the Transform>Distort tool to pinch your parallel lines to meet on your horizon line. These pinched lines now form a set of vanishing lines to give you an idea of where to ground your buildings. Now you can draw your buildings along these lines and they'll look like they fit in the environment. I do this several times to get a bunch of different vanishing points to work with. ➡



8 Details and different shapes bring your piece to life

What makes your city interesting? Since my city is water based, my buildings are organic and flow together. I try to imagine what the different areas of the city are. Where do people live? Where is the government and what do those buildings look like? How about schools?



9 Keep defining all over

This is the most time-consuming part – just keep rendering out details. I continue rendering on the right side and middle section of the city. You must lay that foundation! Toggle your perspective lines on and off often; locking them helps to avoid accidentally drawing on the perspective lines layers. If you need any inspiration, just keep imagining how your society functions and how to render it.

BEFORE



AFTER



10 Symmetrical buildings

Buildings are usually symmetrical. There isn't much symmetry in this city, but there is a little in some places. A shortcut for rendering symmetry (if the building is directly facing the viewer, not at an angle) is to render one side and then select it and duplicate it on a new layer. Flip the new layer horizontally, and then you can drag the new layer to the reflected area and paint it in to fit.



11 Don't forget the background

It's easy to get lost in the minor details and forget the big picture. Remember to zoom out and make sure your city looks like it exists in the world. This is my favourite part – I can spend forever working on little details. The city is starting to take shape. I render the buildings and turn on the guidelines occasionally to make sure no lines are too wonky.



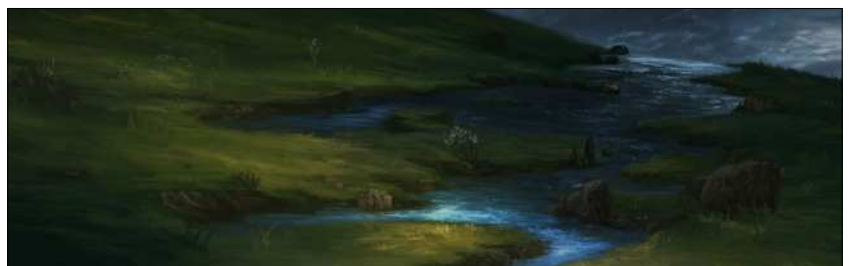
12 Add shadow and light

Shadow helps define the depth of the buildings and where they are in space, while adding extra light makes it easier to pop out your focal points. I add these by creating two new groups on top of the layers I have so far (which is about 100 layers). The shadow group comprises some low-opacity Multiply layers and Normal layers (at 25 per cent Opacity), and the Lighting group is a mixture of 100 per cent Overlay and Soft Light layers. Play around with different types of Layer Effects and colours – you may end up with a really great effect!



13 Almost there...

I flip the canvas horizontally again. I like the flipped version better and will be using that as the final orientation. I finally work on the foreground. This is where reference of pine trees in my neighbourhood becomes useful. Use foliage brushes sparingly: they serve as a good base, but be sure to create new details in the foliage with the Hard Round and Hard Elliptical brushes afterwards, so that the foliage doesn't look like a patterned stamp.



14 Ask for critiques and make final changes

I asked artist friends for feedback (thank you Aaron Miller and Julian Kok!). Having fresh eyes on a piece can really help. They advise to add fog to differentiate the foreground trees and rework the foreground. I add a stream in the foreground to help lead the viewer into the piece instead of falling off the edge of the world. For fog, use a Hard Brush Round and soften it as much as possible using Shift+[, with light opacity, around five per cent or so, and build it up slowly. Then erase the edges of it using the same softened Hard Round brush, around 10 per cent Opacity.

ZBrush, KeyShot, Photoshop & Painter CREATE RETRO ART FROM 3D SCANS

Ken Coleman mixes scanned action figures and digital painting to create 80s-inspired fantasy production art



Artist PROFILE

Ken Coleman
LOCATION: Ireland

Ken lectures in game art and design at Clonmel Digital Campus in Ireland. He also designs for clients such as Catalyst Games and Morbid Angel.
artofkencoleman.com



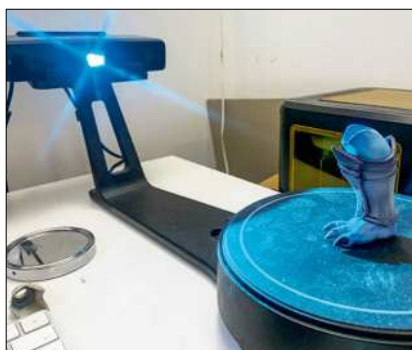
Combining my love of customising action figures and kit-bashing 3D models for concepts is exciting

for me. Over the past year, I've developed a library of 3D scanned assets, including character heads, armour and weapons to composite scenes of my favourite characters from the world of He-Man, Skeletor and the Masters of the Universe.

The vintage toy box art, 80s iconic movie poster art and Frank Frazetta are strong influences on the type of finish I go for in my nostalgic imagery. In this workshop I'll explain my process, from how I 3D-scan and prepare the models, before importing them into ZBrush. I'll show you how to use basic ZBrush navigation tools such as Gizmo, Transpose, Subtools and Brushes to build a character,

combining a model I previously posed and exported in Daz 3D.

The workshop will continue on the lighting and rendering of different passes of the model in KeyShot. These KeyShot renders will then be combined in Photoshop to build an image mixed with my own hand-painted backgrounds and textures and then given a final paintover in Corel Painter to get that 1980s-style oil-painted finish.



1 Preparing for the 3D scans

I prepare a figure in Daz 3D – I have a favourite for my Masters of the Universe projects called Dark Guard. I combine him with some animal and beast morphs to get the clawed hands and feet. I then export this as an object file to be used in ZBrush. I scan the various parts of the figures with my EinScan-SE 3D scanner. The larger-scale models are great for detail on the face, but the armour parts on the seven-inch scale figures are perfect for blocking in 3D.

2 Building the ZBrush figure

I import the Daz 3D model into ZBrush and press T to make sure the model is functioning in the 3D space. Using the Subtool palette on the right of the screen I duplicate the figure and press Import. I select the 3D scanned elements by repeating this process. Every time I duplicate a Subtool and press Import, the new model part will replace the previous one in the composition. I have to be careful to scale the 3D scanned parts using the Gizmo and Transpose tools – not all scanned parts are correct when imported.



3 Lighting in KeyShot

To import the model from ZBrush to KeyShot, I go to the Render menu, select External Render, turn on KeyShot and then press the BPR button. This will import the model directly to KeyShot. Once the model appears in KeyShot I go to Edit>Add Geometry>Sphere. I can then make a light source. To do this, I double-click the sphere model in the scene window in the top right of the screen. When I click the light bulb symbol that opens beneath it, I can change the material to Area Light>Set to Watts. ➡

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4 Materials in KeyShot

KeyShot enables you to drag and drop a material on to any of the separate Subtool elements to colour it. You can also apply a material to the whole model by dragging the material over to the Scene section and dropping it on to the ZBrush label, which is the model and all its elements. If you do this you must press the Lock button in the bottom window twice and Press Unlink Materials to add different materials individually.



5 List of KeyShot materials

I use the same materials apart from the character colours to achieve the right look and translucency of light. Skeletor's face is bone, his skin is electric blue and I use metallic and non-metallic colours for his armour. The other KeyShot materials are GOZ Human Skin and Blue WHITE RIM LIGHT. I export each render as a hi-res PSD file with the clown option turned on to create a silhouette to use for selections in Photoshop.



6 Combining the layers

Once my renders have completed I open the basic colour one in Photoshop. Next, I drag the other layers into this file as Smart Layers. I set the GOZ layer and Blue Rim layer to Soft Light Blend mode. Once I'm happy with the level of translucency of all my layers, I select them all, copy them and merge them (the shortcuts are Ctrl/Cmd+J followed by Ctrl/Cmd+E). I duplicate this layer one more time for the next phase.



7 Face lift with Camera RAW

Photoshop's Camera Raw filter is a powerful tool for adding a degree of punch to your illustrations. Select the top-most merged layer copy and press Filter>Camera Raw Filter. You can see from the image how I've placed my sliders. My approach is always Shadows up, Clarity up, Saturation up slightly and Highlights and Whites down. This extra tweak really gives a burst of colour and detail to your 3D render.



8 Adding texture and detail

I find that using photos of rusty surfaces and stained concrete are fantastic for creating detail and depth in images. The concrete and porous stone is my favourite textures for the skin. I drag these elements on top of the figure and I mask them using the silhouette from the clown layer that I exported from KeyShot. My painted Polyfilla layer is especially useful and fun for creating a bone-like effect on Skeletor's face.



9 Composing a layout

Now that I'm happy with the overall figure, I group all the elements. I create a new file the same size as an ImagineFX page at 22x30cm but at 450dpi for higher resolution. Most of my work is at least A2 in size at 300dpi. I now drag the figure group across and start to place background elements and particles to build a scene. I have folders of hand-painted backdrops, particles and objects to help build scenes quickly.



10 Hand-painted backgrounds

I add stock photos of some Irish coastal landscapes and one of my hand-painted backgrounds. I'm lucky that there are many local landscapes and textures to help enhance my work. Using my local environment in my art is important to me. My hand-painted clouds were created on various large canvas, photographed and combined in Photoshop to create a set of various backgrounds that I can drag and drop into my art.



11 Adding my own particles

I create my own particles by taking a photo of baby powder on black craft paper, as well as creating particles with Painter's Particle brushes. I add these elements by placing them in the scene and setting the Blend mode to Screen. I also create gradients of green by selecting the colour from the glows on the 3D figure's body. Using the Gradient tool and cloud brushes I create directional light that matches the model.



12 Final prep before paintover

Before bringing the composition into Painter for a paintover, I click Image> Duplicate to create a copy of the file. I select the figure's outline, then flatten the image and copy and paste just the figure over itself. I now have options to use Blender brushes on the figure and background separately in Painter. Using large oil brushes for the background and more refined fractal brushes for the skin gives a nice sense of depth.



13 Breaking up the image in Painter or Fresco

You can save the file to the cloud so you can open it on an iPad and use blender and fine art brushes in an art app such as Procreate or Fresco. However, I choose to use Painter on the desktop. I use a limited number of Brushes on the merged layers. My favourites are Stencil Oily Blender and Fractal Blender. I also place some white or brightly coloured, thin highlight lines on a new layer with the Spring Concept Creature brush. Shown here: the before and after versions in Painter.



14 Finishing up in Photoshop

I reopen the image in Photoshop and set the highlights to a Soft Light blend mode. I also experiment with the Opacity of the painted layers and sometimes mask off areas where I may have gone overboard with Painter. The idea is to balance the abstract brush work with the detail and silhouette of the final image. Sometimes I merge and duplicate everything on one final layer and use an Unsharp mask set at 200 per cent at 0.2 pixels for clarity. Finally, my 3D scanner is costly, but try experimenting with smartphone apps such as Bellus3D and LIDAR 3D to create 3D models of everyday objects to use in your artwork. ●

Photoshop IMPROVE YOUR BOSS DESIGNS



Tristan Tait takes you through some different processes and design ideas that go into creating a boss character for a 2D indie game

Artist PROFILE

Tristan Tait
LOCATION: Australia

Tristan is an Australian freelance illustrator who enjoys drawing anything that's a little weird and wild.
tristantait.net

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Every good video game needs a bad guy, and coming up with an engaging boss character can be a fun challenge. They're bigger and meaner than the rest of the game's grunts, and it'll take a bit of work on the player's side to figure out how to beat them. What makes a good boss character though, and what are some of the different ways we can

explore the design to craft and create something memorable?

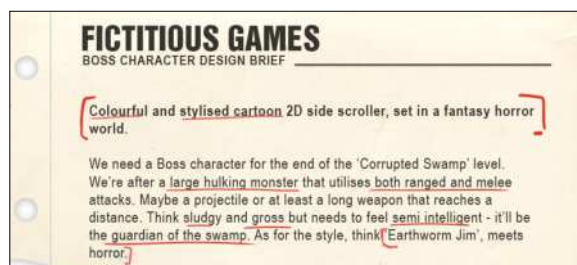
In his workshop, I'm going to run through a few of the different processes and ideas I explore when designing a boss character for a 2D indie game. I'll also show how it can fit within the development pipeline.

Indie game companies are usually only small teams made up of a few people. As a result, it's pretty common for each member to take on

multiple roles within the development pipeline. For the sake of this workshop I'm going to assume the role of art director, concept designer and character artist... so basically I'm telling myself what to do, laying out ideas and then critiquing my own work! So sit back, grab a pen, and follow along by scribbling up your own cartoon monsters and see what your next boss character could be.

1 Study the brief

Before I start drawing out any old boss character, I need to make sure that it's going to fit into the game world. Our game designer and art director have provided a design brief that gives me a good place to start. I've underlined the important features and taken particular note of the style they need: "Colourful and stylised cartoon". Clearly, my design will need to gel with the rest of the game's aesthetic.



RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: HARD ROUND INKER

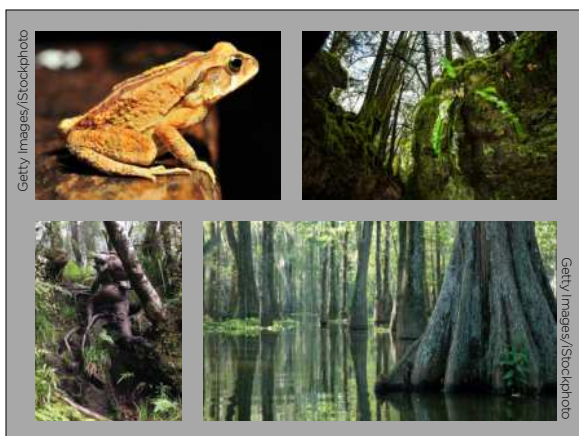
This basic hard Round brush is perfect for blocking in flat colours and inking lines.

TT_MAIN

A bristled brush with Flow and Opacity settings. This is my go-to for most work.

SOFT ROUND01

A simple Round brush with Opacity and Flow settings. Great for soft blending or effects.



2 Find the mood

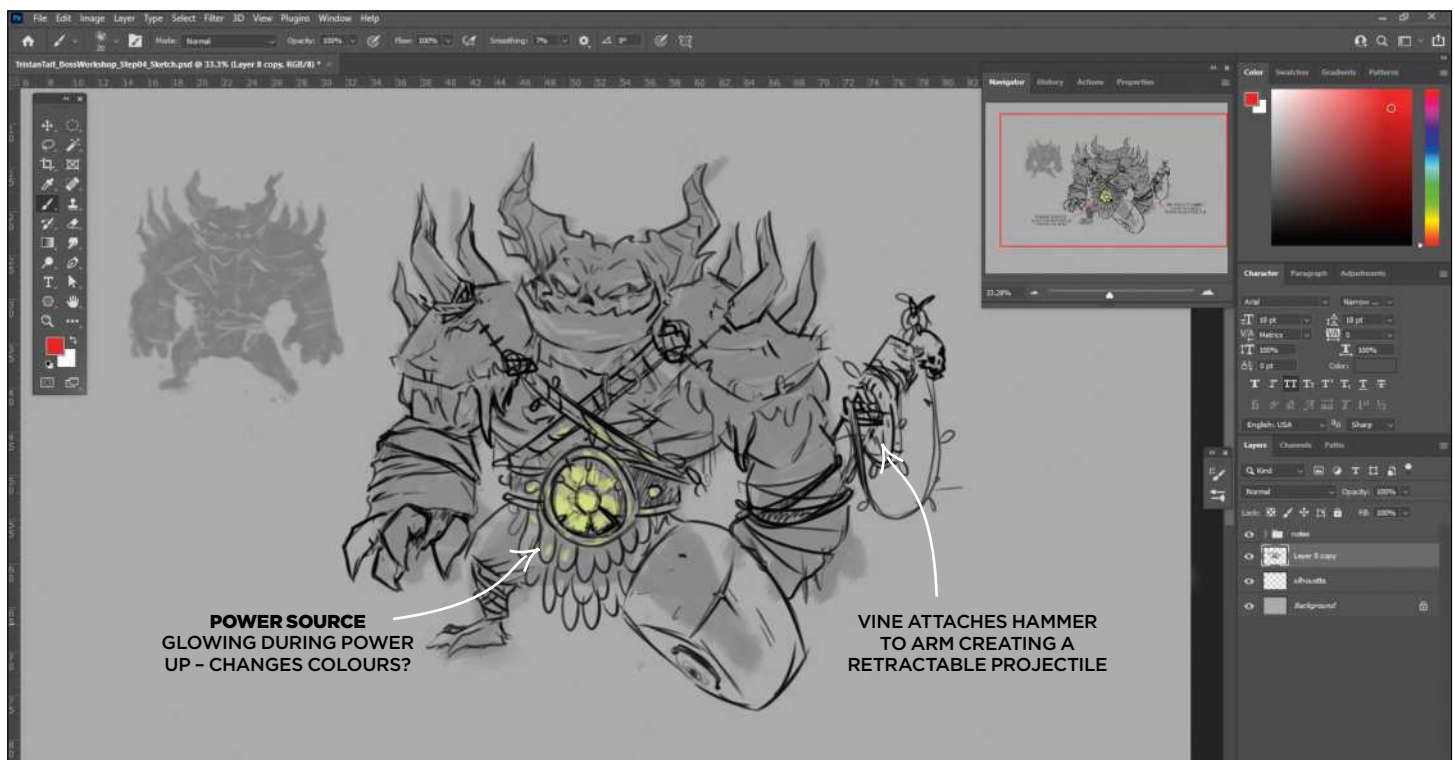
With the brief in mind, I start collecting images to build up a mood board. I may not reference these directly in my final design, but I want a reminder of the feel of the environment and general vibe that we're going for. Here I'm feeling lots of gnarled dead trees, warty toads and dark atmospheric swamps.



3 Exploring silhouettes

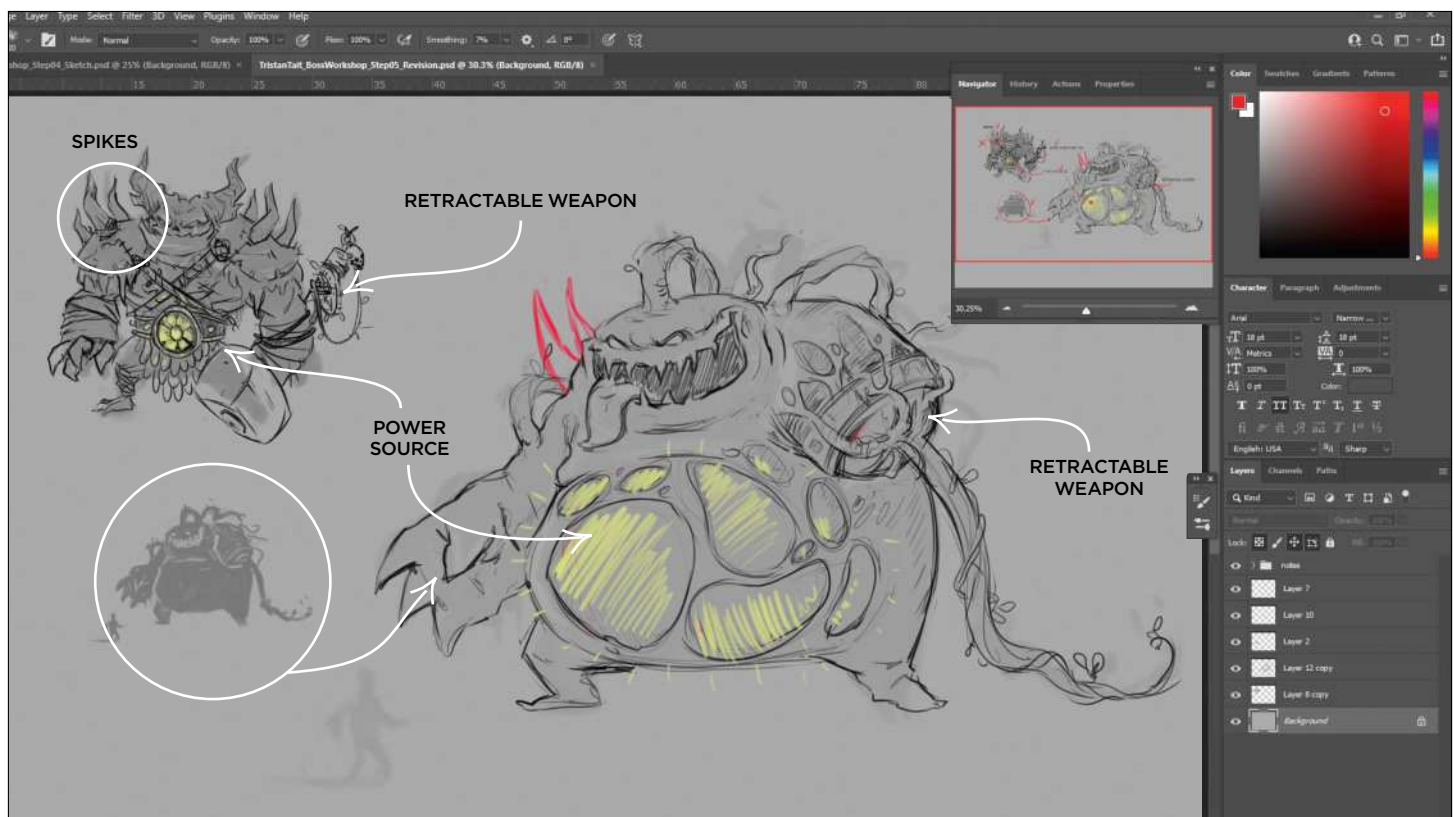
Next, I start blocking in silhouettes. I'm looking for an interesting and easy-to-read shape that helps show some key physical attributes of our boss. I'm also keeping in mind the other enemies throughout the level. Our boss will need to feel similar yet more important. Maybe it's a beefed-up, or a more intelligent and battle-hardened version – something that shows this character is ranked over the others in one way or another. ➡





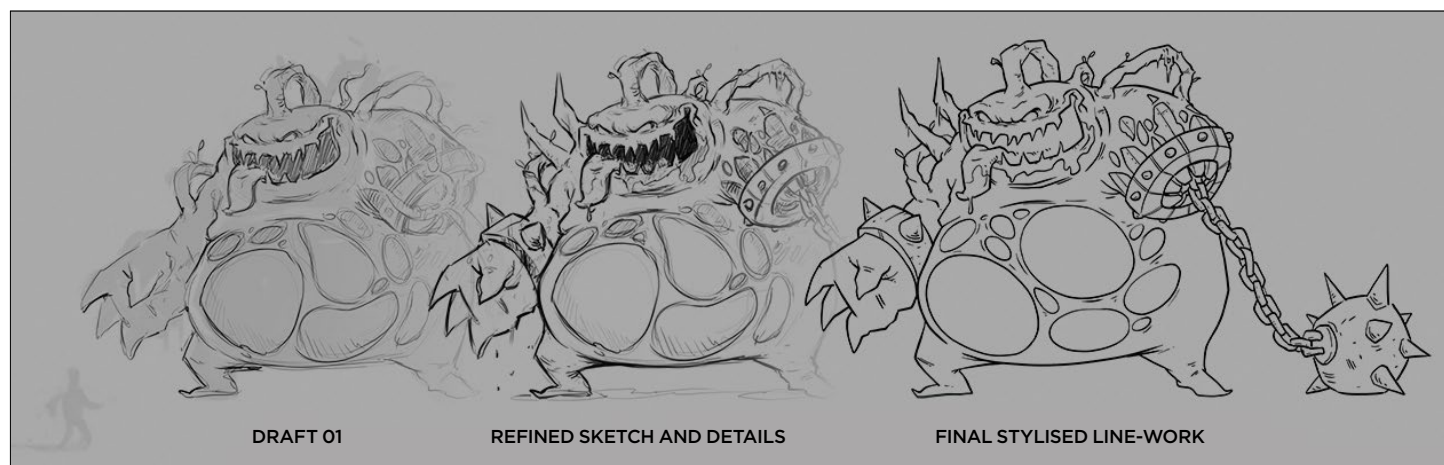
4 Sketch out some details

I feel that the spiky looking guy has a pretty cool shape, so I lower the opacity and start sketching in some details on a new layer to flesh out his design. I've added a few notes to get some key ideas across before showing it to the rest of the team.



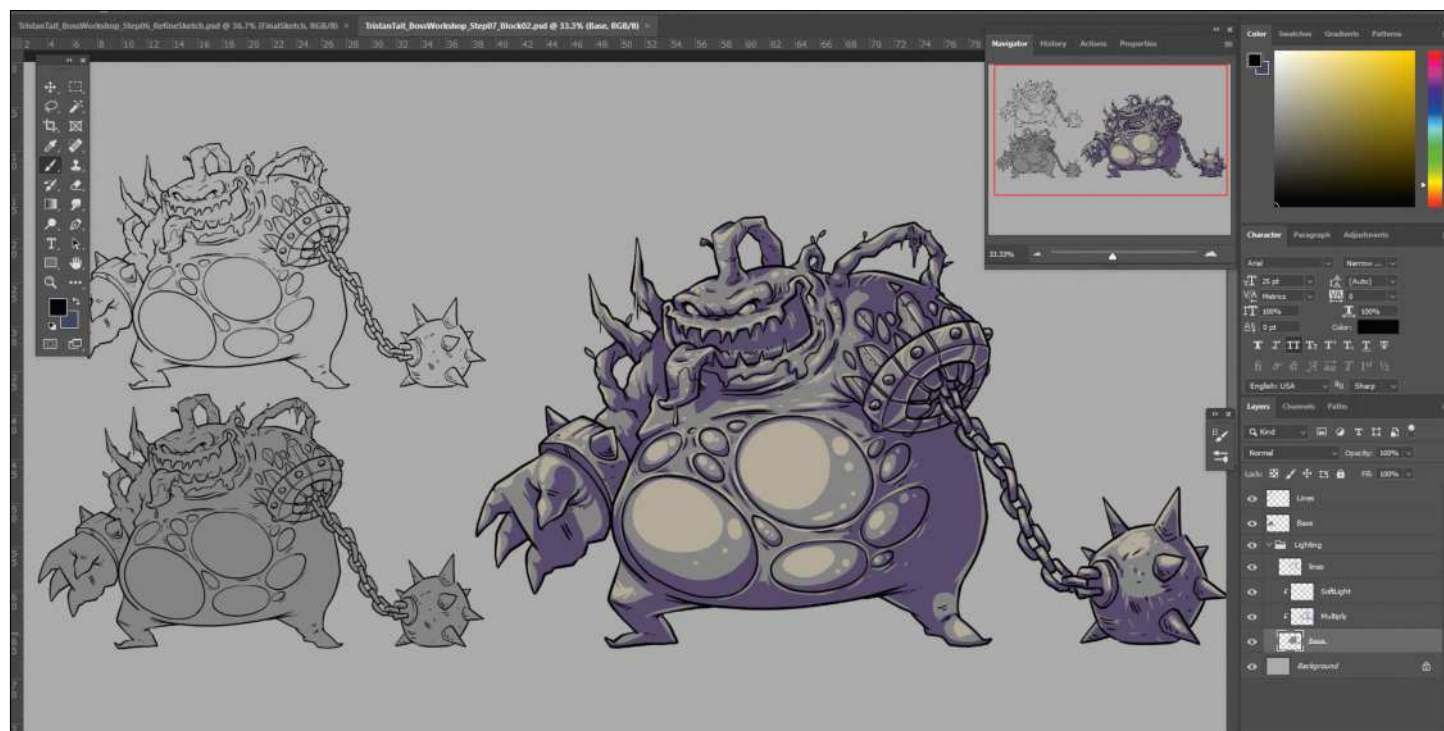
5 Revision and communication

I submit my sketch to the art director and animator to get their thoughts and to see if it works within the context of the game. Turns out they hate it. It's not 'swampy enough' for the level and the animator has pointed out potential issues with his bulky shoulder pads conflicting with his hammer swings. They did like certain aspects though, so I choose another of my silhouettes and build on it with these notes in mind.



6 Refine the sketch

With a newly approved sketch, I build on it while trying to emphasise key visual clues for the player. A boss fight should be a challenge to beat, but not impossible. Visual hints can help prepare the player for what they're up against. Spikes on top? Better not jump on it. Huge claw? Probably going to swipe you with it. Big glowing orb? That's probably important...



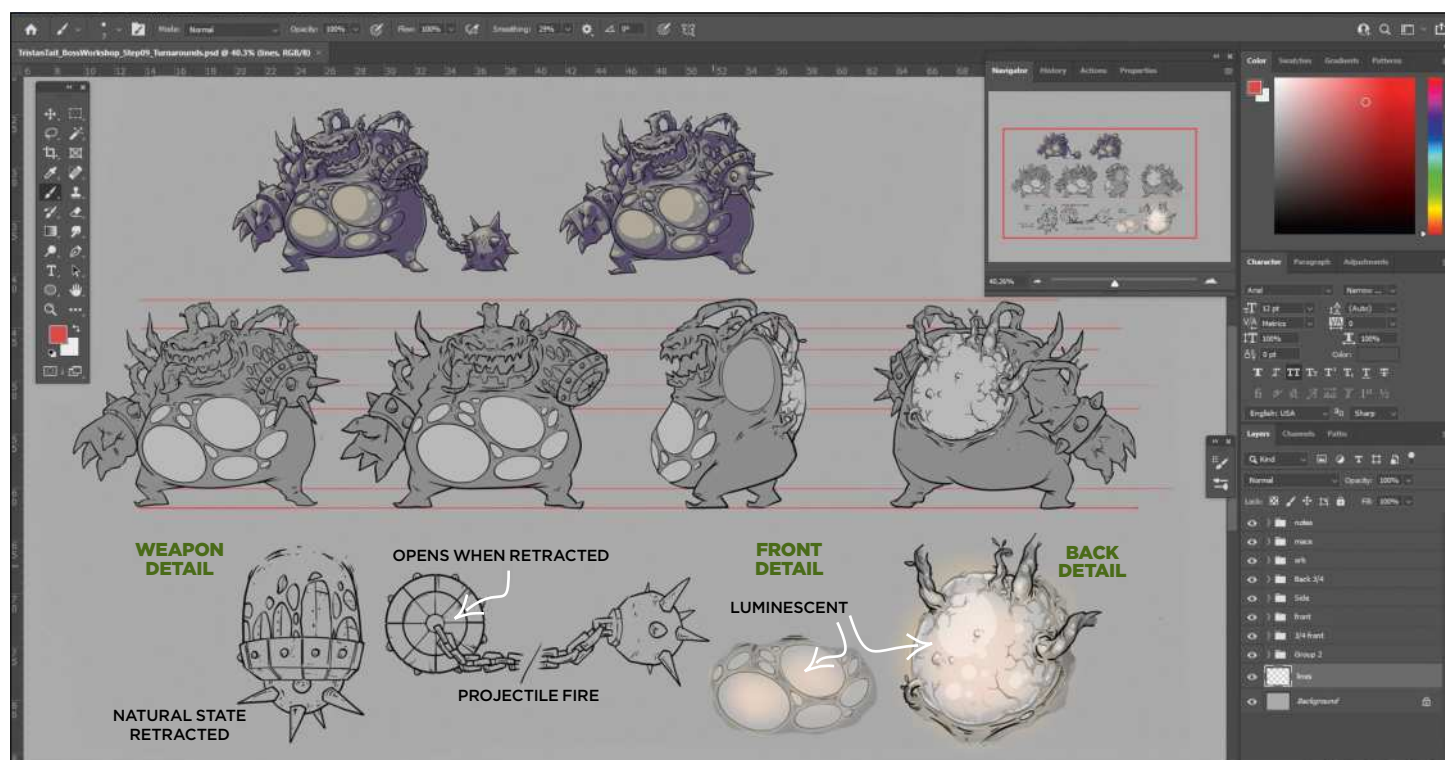
7 Block in the design

Keeping the 2D cartoon style in mind, I cel shade the beast to give it some depth. I create a grey base below my line layer and then use Multiply and Soft Light layers to draw in my shadows and highlights. I do this with the same hard Round inker brush I used for the line-work.

8 Develop variations

Using my greyscale character as a base, I duplicate and paint in some variations to show our team. They want to see how he might look with armour or different attachments, so I experiment a little and end up mashing a few of the ideas into one for the final version. ➡➡





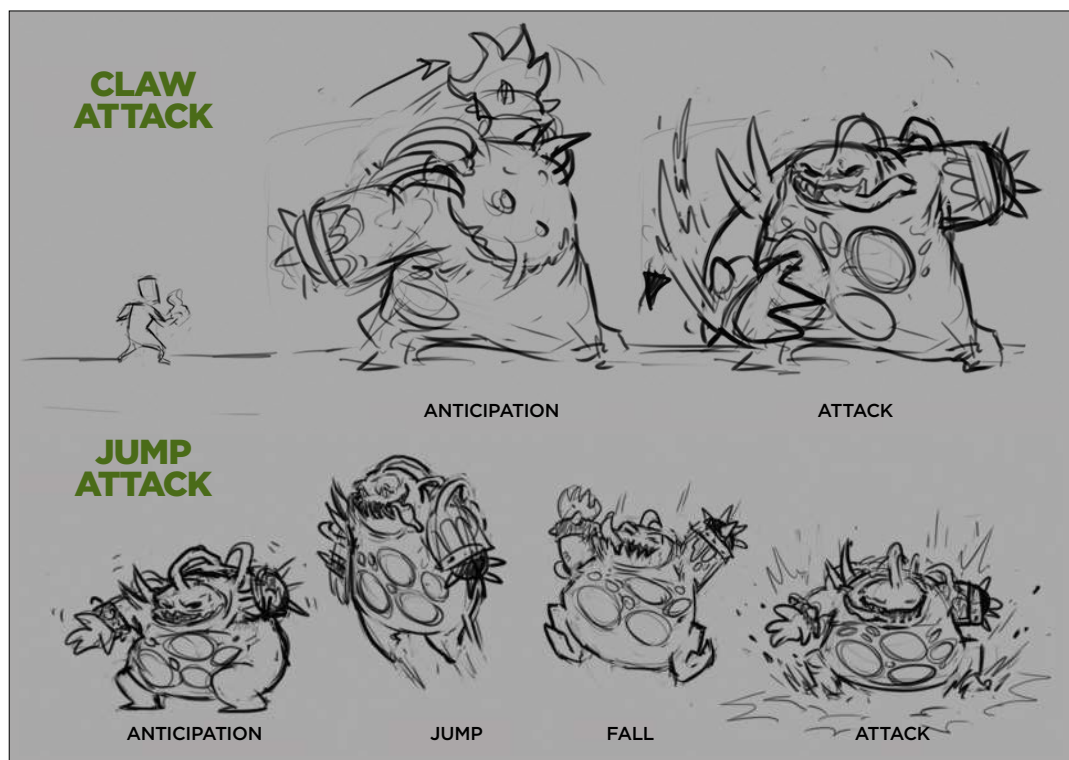
9 Prepare turnarounds for further down the pipeline

Creating a turnaround of the character will help the modeller and animator to see it from every angle, making their job much easier. I'm taking care to point out important features here that must be included in the models. This can then be sent off to the modeller or animator to start building up the base character while we play around with the superficial stuff, such as colours.



10 Colour tests

I'm now overlaying my greyscale image with different colour variations to see what works best. The brighter green one fits the swamp theme most, so we move ahead with that.

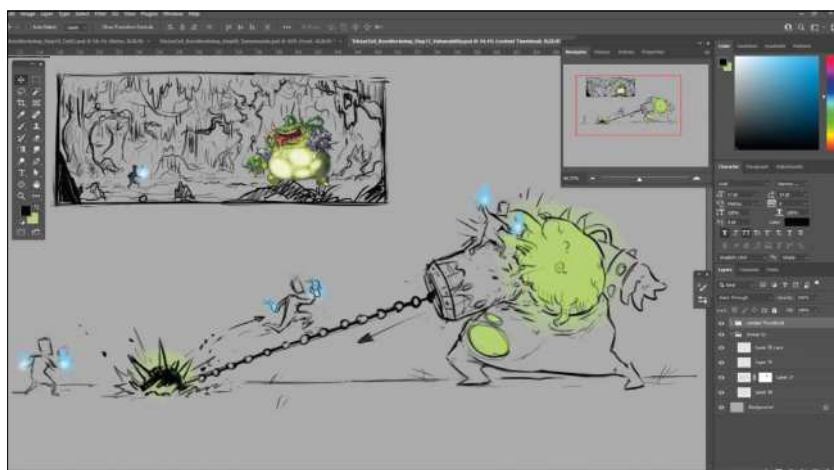
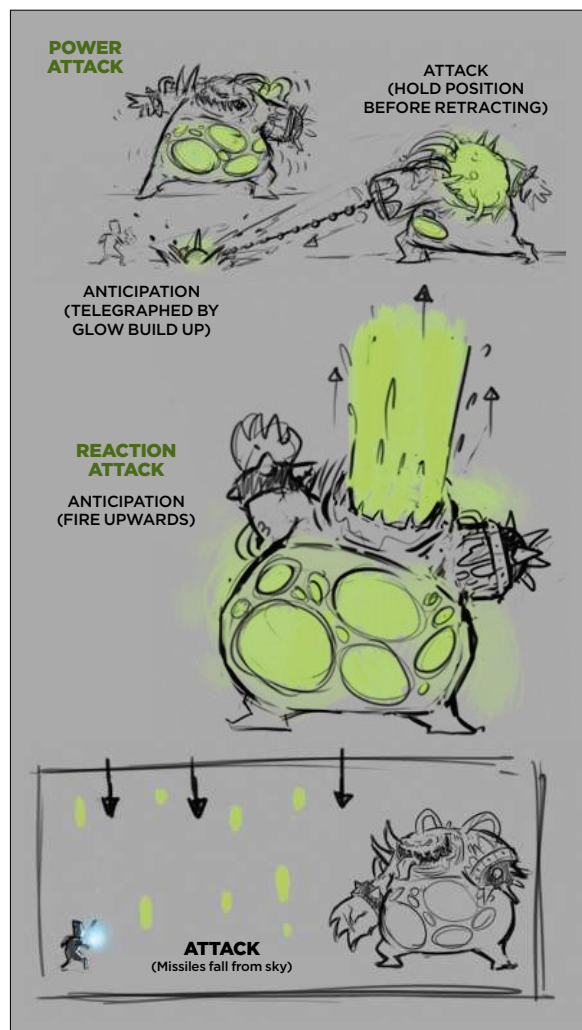


11 Sketch key frames of the boss's attacks

To help the animators, I'm sketching up quick key frames to show the melee attack in action. In this case, if our hero gets too close he's going to be hit with a big ol' claw swing! If he's too far away, he's gonna get jumped on! I recommend creating anticipation phases to help telegraph the boss's movements. The player will have more fun recognising attacks and planning strategy than just being instantly hit.

12 Break down power moves

I want to emphasise the power of the special attacks and so I use a glow in the power source to 'charge up' the moves. Here we have our projectile chain strike and a fun vomit reaction attack. The chain attack is going to be his power move and so I emphasise the glowing power source in this sketch. This will act as a telegraph for the player to prepare for their counter.



13 Visualise vulnerabilities

Your boss character can't be invincible, so it's always good to think of their weaknesses and find ways to show that in their design. To make it a bit of a challenge, I hide his only weak spot on his back. The only time you can see it is after his chain strike. The hero must run along the chain while it's lodged in the ground to attack. A successful strike will then throw the hero off and trigger the reaction attack that the hero needs to dodge.



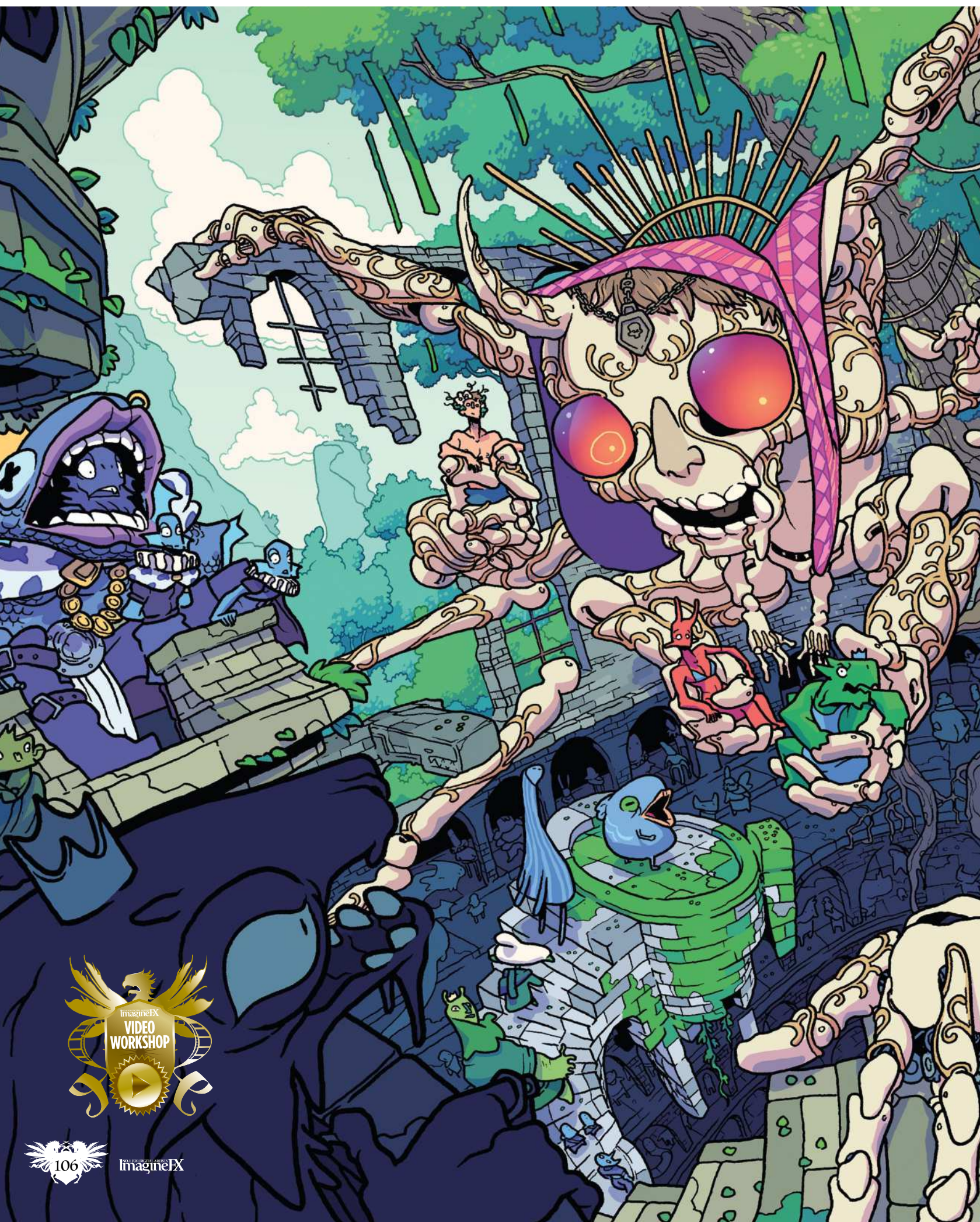
14 Health states and phases

A fun part of a boss fight is the build up of tension as you get closer to winning. This can be done a few different ways, and in this case I represent it visually with a colour change in his power source. You know when he's in the red phase that you're close to winning the fight! This could also be emphasised by speeding up his actions to create more intensity.



15 Draw a key frame sequence to depict defeat

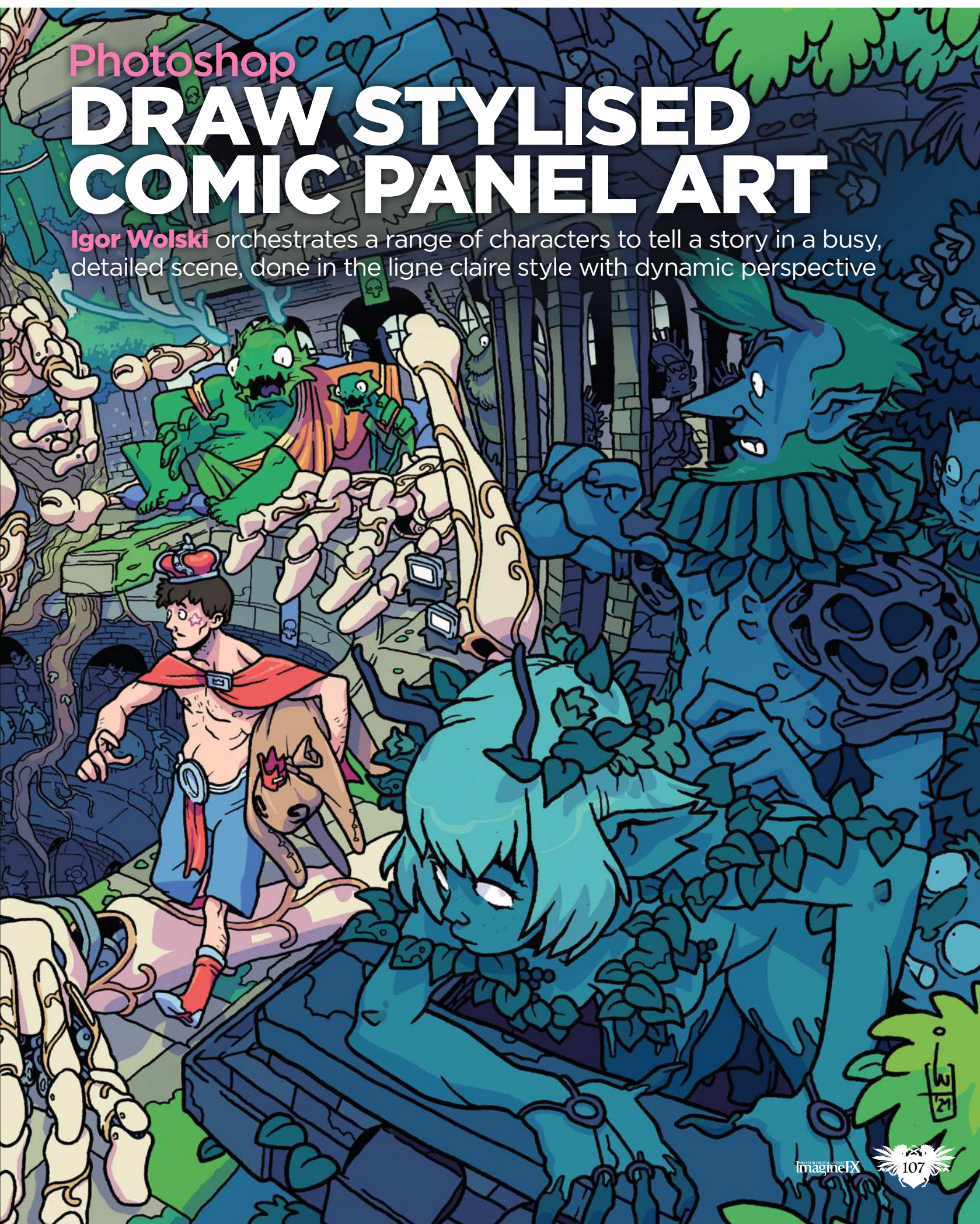
One last set of key frames to help the animator will be for our big dramatic death scene. Keeping in line with his design and the cartoon vibe we have, I think a fun way to send him off would be to extend his reaction attack and have him expel his entire power source until he deflates like an empty sack. And there it is: a bunch of things to play around with when creating your next boss character! Hope you had fun! ●



Photoshop

DRAW STYLISTED COMIC PANEL ART

Igor Wolski orchestrates a range of characters to tell a story in a busy, detailed scene, done in the ligne claire style with dynamic perspective



Artist PROFILE

Igor Wolski
LOCATION: Poland

Igor is an artist from Gdańsk. He has over 10 years of experience in the illustration and comics industries, but has also worked on mobile games, film production, board games and commercials. igorwolski.com

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See page 7 now!



The process of creating an artwork is a little like writing a story. While I never sit down with a blank piece of paper without an initial concept, the actual idea of what I'm trying to show is only fully formed once the sketch is done.

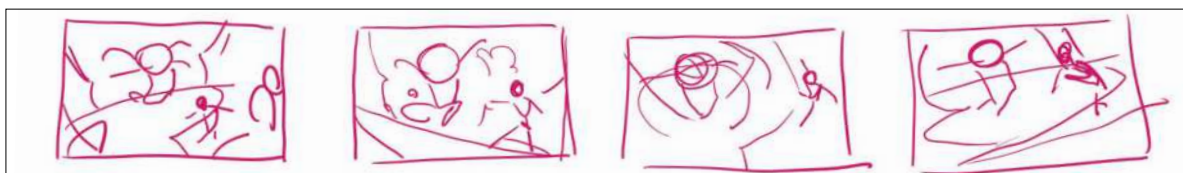
During that process a character's position or expression might change them from a protagonist to a villain, or the location moves from inside to

outside, because a pillar looks better as a tree. I love going on these imaginative trips, because I never know where I'm going to end up (sometimes it's nowhere special, but that's also okay).

When cramming information into one frame, you have to think about how the viewer's eyes are going to travel across it, what's going to pop and what's going to be subtly hiding in the background. Every element might be just decoration, but can also

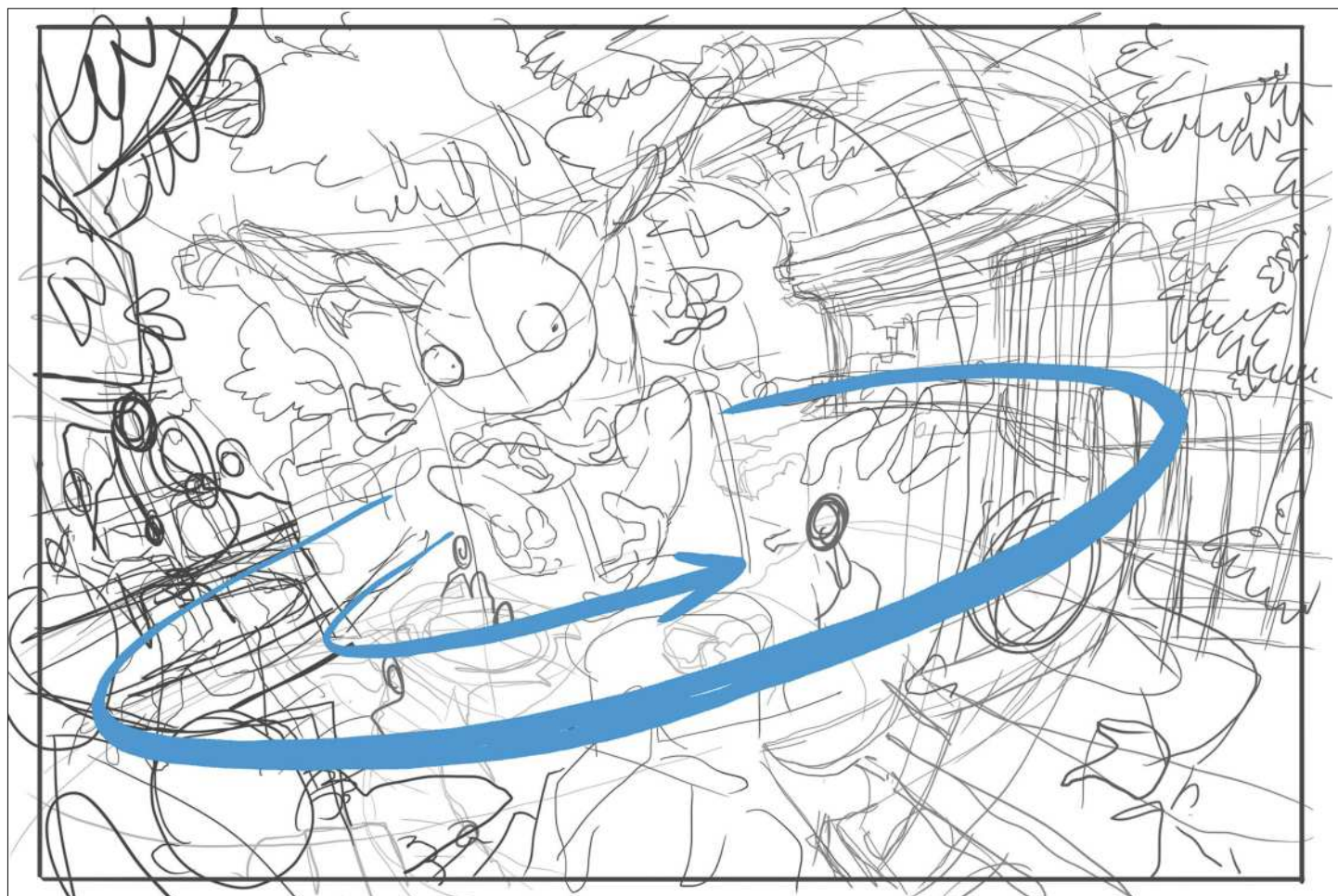
be a piece of information for the viewer to pick up on.

In this workshop I'll try to break down my process of how I usually go about drawing anything, whether it's illustrations or comic panels. Both of those visual mediums have an ability to tell a story – that's why I focus on that aspect in the tutorial. Here, I want to also point out how important it is to be creative not only with the designs, but also with composition and space.



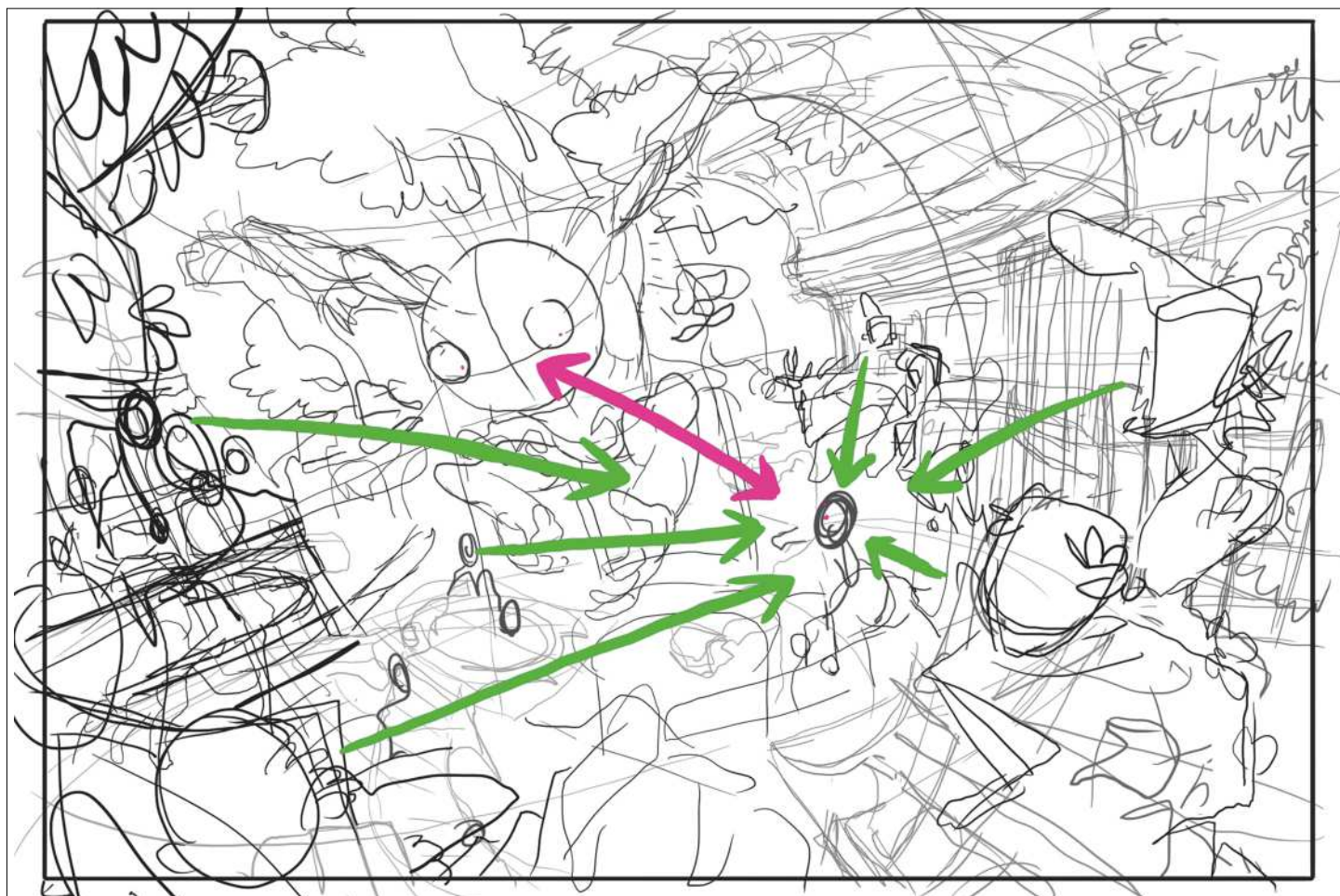
1 From brain to paper

When it comes to creating bigger pieces, proper planning is key. Once I have the idea, I start brainstorming with super-quick sketches, just to find the initial composition and the point of view to bounce off of; these are very rough and often unreadable to a bystander. It's almost like I'm writing in my own secret language.



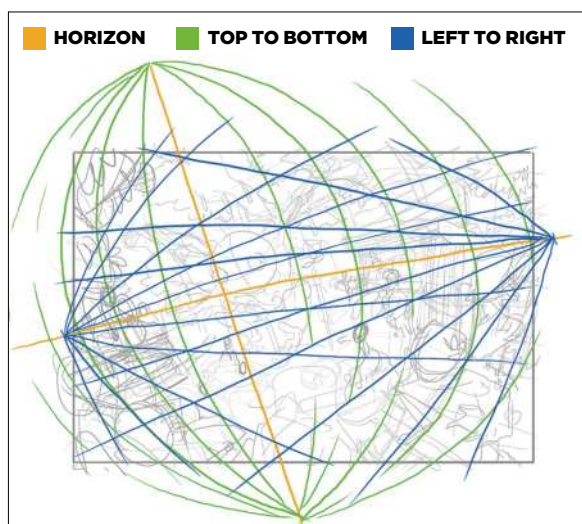
2 Fleshing out the concept and adding details

After finding the rough composition, I place it at the bottom of the layer stack on a low opacity and start adding details over it. Here I plan the position of the characters and objects. I also put everything in a form of a spiral, from the bottom-left corner to the character in the middle.



3 Develop the storytelling in the scene

I believe the story in an illustration is told through the expressions and sightlines of its figures, so I check where the main and secondary characters are looking. Our hero has snuck into an event and has been discovered, so while he looks at the spotter, everyone else looks at him.



4 Perspective and a fish-eye view

I draw perspective lines based on my sketch. I start by identifying the horizon and then working out where the middle of my composition is on it. From there I add the vertical and horizontal lines, by estimating where they should be by looking at my sketch. Note that it doesn't have to be very precise.



5 Models and references

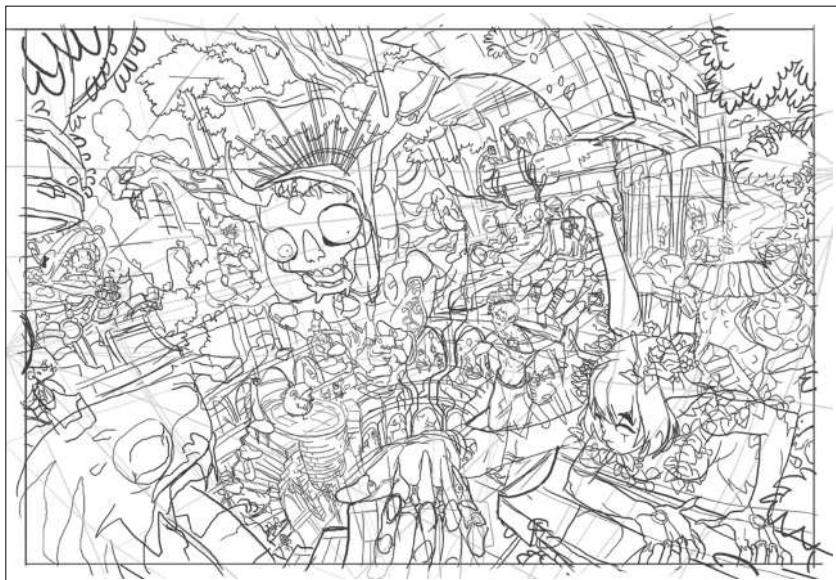
I try to use references as much as I can, to help expand my visual library. For people I either just search online for what I need or take a video of myself or my family. For clothes, architecture or other objects I like to include accidental online finds, which ensures that something unexpected ends up in my art. ➡

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

DEFAULT BRUSH:
ROUND BRUSH

I use the basic, Round brush in Pencil mode (without anti-aliasing), which nicely mimics real-life pens.



6 Finishing up the sketch

Now I finish up all the details. I like my drawings to seem very cluttered, so I try to never think about any one thing as a standalone object, but more as big clumps of many objects. I usually achieve this by always having my characters and items placed on multiple levels, often sitting or stacked on top of one another.

8 Inking my line-art

For line-art, I use Uni PIN Fine Line black ink pens, ranging in size from 0.05 to 1.0mm. The only rule I follow here is that the closer the object is to the viewer, the thicker the line. If I make any mistakes I'll fix them later in Photoshop; I like to write small notes on the side of the paper to remind myself.



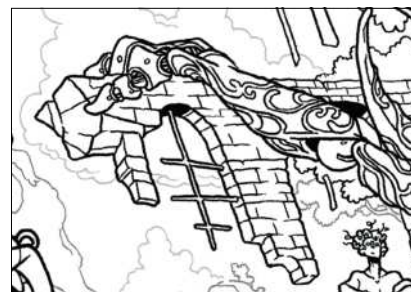
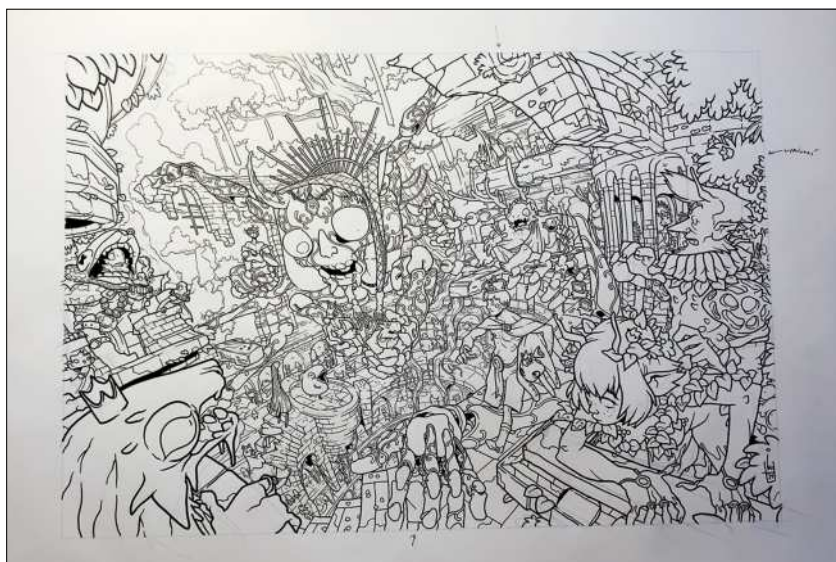
9 Back to digital

I scan the image in at a high resolution (usually 600dpi) as a black and white bitmap. This creates hard, pure black line-art without any anti-aliasing. It may look rough, but it gives the image a unique, gritty feel. Next, I fix any mistakes I've done on paper, following my notes.



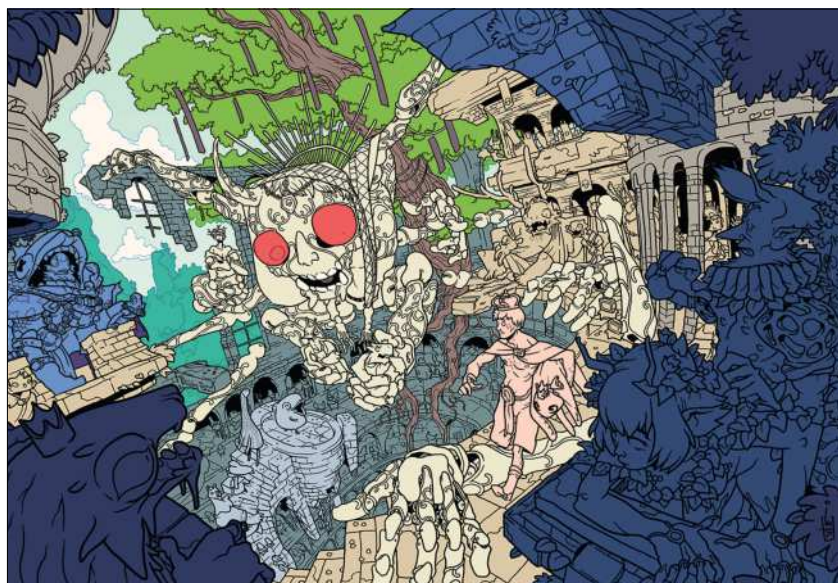
7 Printing out the sketch

Because I still like to do a large chunk of my work traditionally, at this point I print out the finished sketch on paper in a very light blue colour. Carrying out this stage on paper doesn't give me any advantage over doing it digitally – it's just my personal preference.



10 Dividing the lines

The last thing I do before colouring is to divide the lines that I want to colour from the black ones I wish to leave intact. This means everything in the background, any light sources or patterns, or anything that would benefit from a smoother line. I select the lines I want to separate and put them on different layers.



11 Grouping colours

To see if the initial colour palette I have in my head even works, I divide the image in large colour groups, based by their position and role in the illustration. Even though I change a lot of the initial ideas throughout the colouring process, this helps a lot with enhancing the clarity of the entire piece.



12 Applying flat colours

Finding the right colours is always a challenge. I mainly use flat, simple colours without any gradients or textures, to balance the complex nature of the line art. Especially with crowded pieces like this, I try to keep everything in a similar colour palette and reserve any contrasting colours for either the main characters or key objects of interest.



13 Adding shadows

I create the shadows as a flat colour on a semi-transparent layer, without any form of special colour mixing. The best colour for shading is usually the colour on the opposite side of the colour wheel, but since it's not always that easy, sometimes I have to just try a bunch of options to see what works best.



14 Making some finishing touches

Almost there! At this point I look through the picture and think of what else could benefit from last-minute tweaks. This can include any special effects, some patches of light or deeper shadows. After this, I like to leave the piece for the night to look at it one more time the next day with fresh eyes, and we're done! ●

Photoshop

CREATE A MIXED-GENRE CHARACTER

Dave Greco showcases the key techniques behind the creation of this collaborative original character

Artist PROFILE

Dave Greco

LOCATION: US

Dave is currently a senior visual development artist for Blizzard Entertainment and has been working in the game industry for over 18 years.
artstation.com/dgreco



In this painting, I wanted to create a small, intimate moment with my original character,

Vaele. She was created recently, along with the help from my Twitch community, and was a great exercise on creating an OC. It was fantastic to brainstorm an original idea within a group and then expand on it, live while people watched.

Since then, this piece was created as a small thank you to everyone involved for hitting some recent milestones. I was aiming for something that was warm, inviting, and felt like a pleasing, cosy image for a viewer to relax to.

Over these next few pages I will share a quick overview of my creation process, as well as some important tips and tricks I learnt along the way.

Top tips for... CHARACTER CREATION



1 Early sketch

In this phase, it's best to find a nice pencil brush and start sketching with loose lines and shapes. It's important for me to keep my hand moving pretty fast and not let myself get slowed down by any major details. The painting will only stiffen up as you render, so keep it as loose as possible.



2 Base colour/refine

Next I like to do another, more refined sketch on top of the loose one. This allows me to dive into the smaller shape design more and really find the parts that will make the piece work. I use a Multiply layer to wash colour right on top of it, usually setting the tone for the painting.



3 Start the render

With the base applied, I like to dive into colour pretty fast. I swap up my brushes quite a bit trying to apply shadow and light to start to bring the piece to life. The best part of digital painting is it's super easy to just paint over it if you don't like the current direction.



PREVIOUS VAELE WORKS

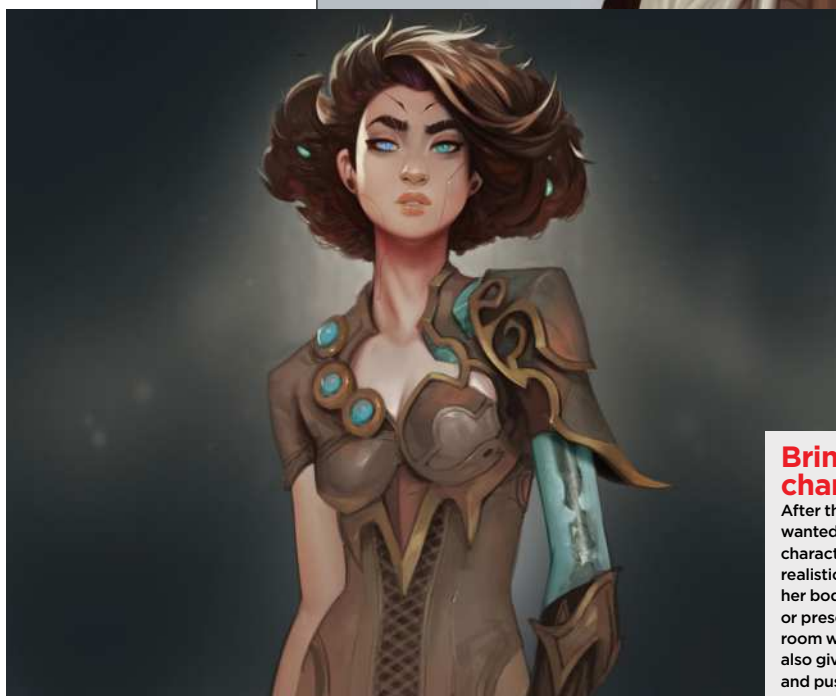
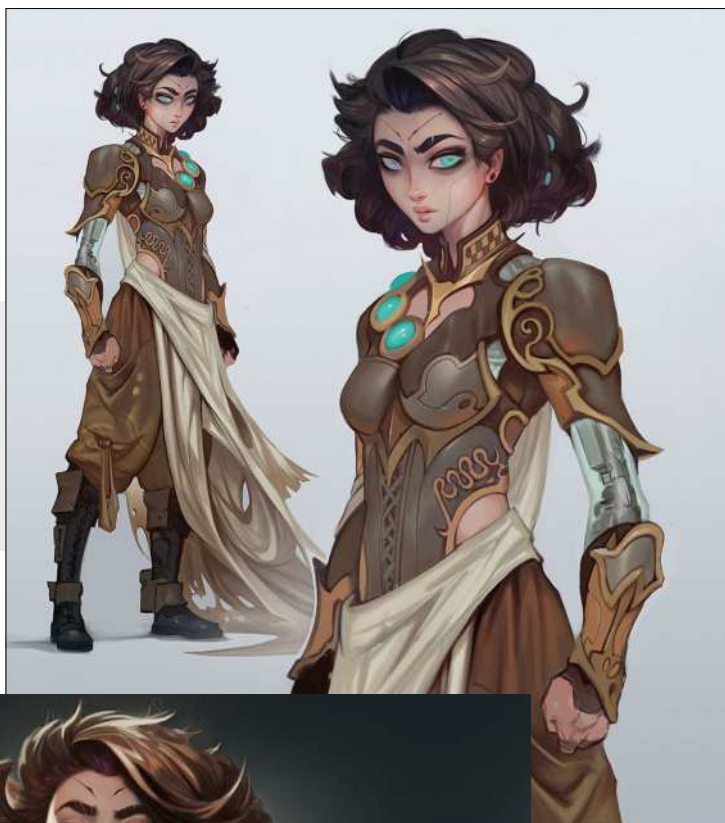


Characters in full-body view

I render each character individually at full-body and on separate layers. This gives me extra flexibility when applying the key art to different media. Sometimes they even show up on consumer products, such as posters or playmats.

Render and clean-up

We chose a sketch from the previous set, and worked up a clean render to help further explore some ideas. The warm colours felt great and the small pops of aquamarine helped to add extra visual interest to the character's armour.



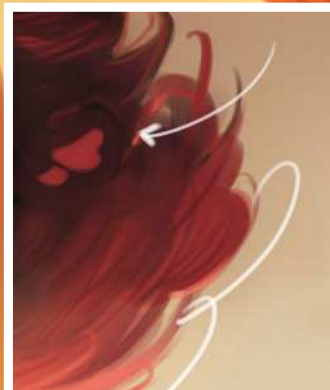
Bringing a character to life

After the recent clean-up, we wanted to really bring the character to life with a more realistic version. The slight tilt of her body as if she was walking or presenting herself in the room was important. This step also gives more time to revise and push the design further.

FINAL IMAGE

Find fun in the abstract

One thing I always love to do is get lost in the abstract shapes of designing hair. I don't always feel like it has to be super realistic to be able to fit into a painting. This piece is a great example of just having fun with hair shapes and creating a delightful flow, for the simple reason of just loving how it looks. Embrace the crazy that can come from it!



Capturing small moments

I really wanted this image to feel like a one-on-one moment with the viewers, something that felt a little more personal. It was important to me to convey this idea of you coming up to talk to her on an outside balcony, then she looks over and you both catch each others' eyes. Those moments feel very special to me and it is something I am working on capturing better with every piece I create.

Face and anatomy

I love using reference! If the angle of the face is causing you problems, it's great to just pop out your phone and snap a couple of pictures to get the angles right. Embrace using reference, all the professionals do, and so should you.

Lighting

To help define the composition and really make a piece pop visually, lighting is extremely important. Creating great hits of light in some of the most important parts of the image is a fantastic way to direct the viewers' eyes. High contrast is a great way to do that, and then let the viewer move around the piece from there.

Mixing sci-fi and fantasy

I love creating designs that exist between both genres. I am a massive fan of both and they each have amazing motifs to be creative from. If there is a look or style that you feel drawn to, be inspired, and merge that love into your own work.

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES:
DG_MAIN

I use DG_Main for almost all my rendering. It's really just a square chalk type brush but I love it! I feel like I have so much control and it offers just the right amount of texture to give the piece a little grit.

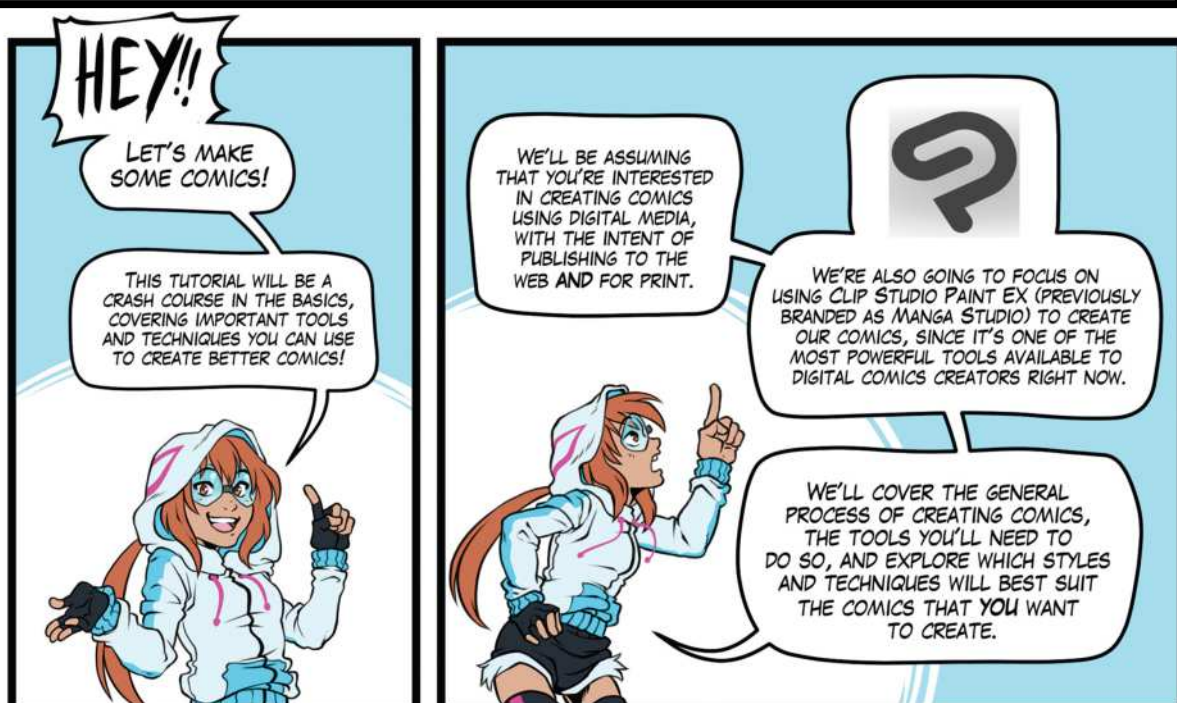
Clip Studio Paint CREATE YOUR OWN COMIC

Digital artist **Rebekka Hearl** teaches us the basics of producing a comic series, for web and for print, in Clip Studio Paint

Artist PROFILE

Rebekka Hearl
LOCATION: UK

Rebekka is a digital designer and illustrator living in the south of England. She sells her merchandise online and at comic conventions around the country, while working on her webcomic *Monster Boy* in her spare time.
<https://linktr.ee/ParaParano>



WORKSHOP BRUSHES

CLIP STUDIO PAINT

DEFAULT BRUSHES: DARKER PENCIL

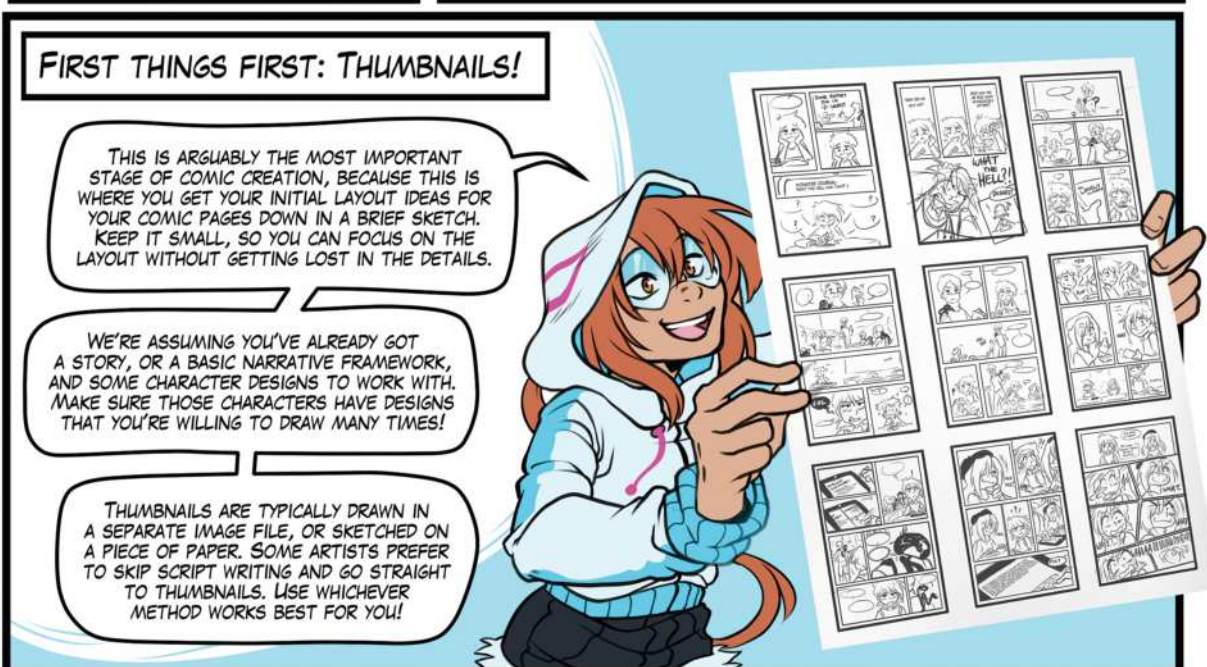
A moderately soft brush that offers a lot of control. I like to ink more painterly works with it.

MAPPING PEN

My favourite inking pen! The amount of control you can get out of this brush is crazy.


OPAQUE WATERCOLOUR

I love CSP's watercolour brushes. I often use this instead of the blur/smudge tools.



NEXT, WE'LL LOOK AT HOW TO USE PANEL LAYOUT TO ASSIST IN NARRATIVE CLARITY.

HOW MANY KEY NARRATIVE STEPS, OR "BEATS", ARE NEEDED TO CONVEY THE STORY TO THE READER? IF YOU'RE DRAWING FROM A WRITTEN SCRIPT, IDENTIFY KEY MOMENTS IN THE DIALOGUE AND DIRECTION. HOW MANY PANELS WILL IT TAKE TO CONVEY TO THE READER WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE SCENE?


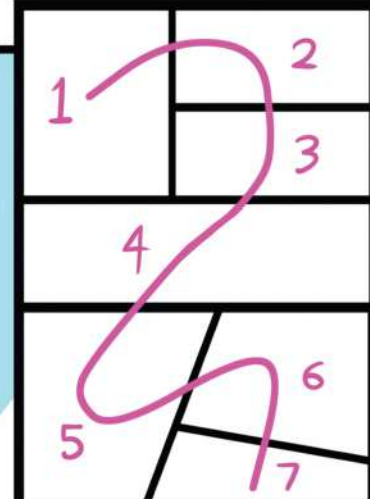


TAKE FOR EXAMPLE: A CHARACTER LOOKING FOR SOMETHING. FIRST WE SHOW THEM SEARCHING-

SECOND WE SHOW THEM NOTICING SOMETHING-

THEN WE SHOW THEM PICKING UP THE OBJECT, FOR THREE PANELS TOTAL.


WHAT IS THEIR REACTION? WHAT DOES THAT TELL THE READER, AND WHAT DO YOU WANT THE READER TO FEEL?

IS IT OBVIOUS WHICH PANEL SHOULD BE READ NEXT? MAKE SURE THERE'S A CLEAR READING ORDER, OR PANEL FLOW, TO GUIDE YOUR READER'S EYE ACROSS YOUR PAGES!

BEFORE YOU BEGIN WORK ON YOUR COMIC PROPER, DECIDE ON A PAGE FORMAT!

DO YOU WANT YOUR COMIC TO BE PRINTED IN UNIVERSAL DIMENSIONS (A4, A5 ETC), OR UNUSUAL DIMENSIONS (HORIZONTAL, ETC)?




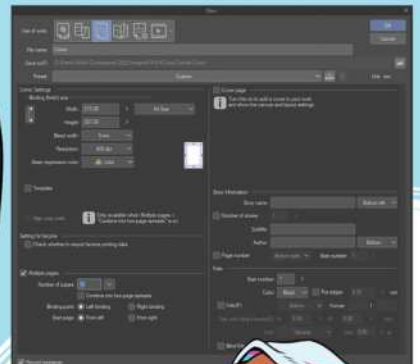
IT'S BEST TO CONSIDER THIS DURING SETUP, SO YOU WON'T HAVE TO MAKE ANY MAJOR CHANGES TO YOUR COMIC PAGES LATER.

NEXT IS DOCUMENT SETUP!

WHEN CREATING A NEW FILE, SELECT "COMIC" UNDER "USE OF WORK". NAME THE PROJECT AND SELECT WHERE IT'LL BE SAVED ON YOUR DEVICE. TO SET YOUR COMIC'S PAGE DIMENSIONS, YOU CAN SELECT A UNIVERSAL SIZE FROM THE "PRESET" DROPDOWN, OR ENTER IT MANUALLY UNDER "BINDING SIZE". PAGES ARE AUTOMATICALLY SET TO 5MM BLEED AS STANDARD.

IF YOU WANT TO PRINT YOUR COMIC, PLEASE SET THE PPI TO AT LEAST 300!



"BASIC EXPRESSION COLOUR" IS YOUR COMIC'S COLOUR SETTINGS. IF YOU'RE WORKING WITH A BLACK AND WHITE OR GREYSCALE COMIC, SELECT EITHER "GREYSCALE" OR "MONOCHROME" RESPECTIVELY.

USE THE CREATE FRAME TOOL TO DRAW COMIC PANELS, LIKE THIS ONE, QUICKLY AND EASILY.




THIS CREATES A FOLDER WITH A MASK AUTOMATICALLY APPLIED - MEANING YOU CAN'T ACCIDENTALLY DRAW OUTSIDE THE FRAME. VERY USEFUL!







DIDN'T GET THE FRAME SHAPE RIGHT ON THE FIRST TRY?

USE THE OBJECT ARROW - UNDER "OPERATION" - TO RESIZE FRAMES BY PULLING AT THE CORNER VERTICES.

VERY HANDY IF THINGS FEEL TOO CRAMPED INSIDE THE PANELS!

USE "DIVIDE FRAME FOLDER" TO CUT AN EXISTING FRAME, CREATING A NEW PANEL FOLDER.

NEXT UP: DRAWING!

USING YOUR THUMBNAI LS AS REFERENCE, START LAYING OUT YOUR PAGES!

COMICS WILL REALLY TEST YOUR DRAWING SKILLS. ANATOMY, EXPRESSIONS, BACKGROUNDS, PERSPECTIVE, VISUAL COMMUNICATION - COMICS ARE A GREAT TEACHING TOOL!

THERE ARE TOOLS AVAILABLE TO HELP YOU LEARN THE ROPES, SUCH AS GOOGLE SKETCHUP: A COMPLETELY FREE 3D MODELING RESOURCE. IT'S SIMPLE TO USE, AND GREAT FOR GETTING THE CAMERA ANGLES YOU NEED FOR YOUR COMIC PANELS!

MAKE SPACE FOR YOUR SPEECH BUBBLES AS YOU DRAW. UNLESS USED FOR EFFECT, YOU GENERALLY DON'T WANT SPEECH BUBBLES TO BE TOO CLOSE TO YOUR CHARACTERS - THEY BOTH NEED ROOM TO BREATHE! CAN YOUR IDEA BE CONVEYED IN FEWER WORDS? PLEASE BREAK UP PANELS AND SPEECH BUBBLES OFTEN, OR ELSE YOUR READER WILL LOSE INTEREST, AND YOU'LL RUN OUT OF ROOM OKAYTHAT'SWAYTOOCLOSE

SIMILARLY, CONSIDER CHARACTER PLACEMENT WITHIN FRAMES, AND THE EFFECT IT HAS. FOR EXAMPLE, THE LAST TWO PANELS HAVE LOW INTENSITY-

BUT USING ZOOM-INS, ANGLED FRAMES, AND DETAILED CHARACTER DRAWINGS CAN INCREASE INTENSITY!

HOWEVER, YOU SHOULD SAVE INTENSITY FOR APPROPRIATE NARRATIVE MOMENTS. AFTER ALL, INTENSITY CAN ONLY BE ACHIEVED WHEN GIVEN THE CHANCE TO CONTRAST WITH SLOWER, CALMER MOMENTS.

SO NEVER FEEL LIKE USING UNIFORM FRAMES IS BORING OR UNCREATIVE! TO REALLY DELIVER ON AN IMPACTFUL MOMENT, IT'S BEST TO FOCUS ON NARRATIVE CLARITY...

-AND STRIKE WHERE IT COUNTS!!

USING PANEL BREAKS, AND CHARACTERS OVERLAPPING PANELS, CAN BE A GREAT WAY TO SELL THE INTENSITY OF A SCENE TO THE READER. ACTION AND FIGHT SCENES IN PARTICULAR BENEFIT FROM THESE TECHNIQUES.

IT CREATES A LOT OF VISUAL INTEREST, AND REALLY "WAKES UP" THE READER AND MAKES THEM PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT'S HAPPENING.

ACTION SCENES CAN BE PARTICULARLY DEMANDING OF AN ARTIST'S SKILLS. CLIP STUDIO PAINT'S POSABLE 3D CHARACTER MODELS CAN BE A GREAT HELP, ESPECIALLY WITH PERSPECTIVE AND FORESHORTENING.

SHAKE SHAKE



INKING IS THE PROCESS OF DRAWING OVER YOUR SKETCHES (ON A NEW LAYER!) AND FINALISING THE LINES.

CSP HAS A WIDE SELECTION OF BRUSHES AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD ON CLIP STUDIO ASSETS. EXPERIMENT WITH DIFFERENT BRUSHES AND PRESETS TO FIND A STYLE THAT SUITS YOUR COMIC.

"SPOT BLACKS" IS THE TERM USED TO DESCRIBE AREAS OF A DRAWING, SUCH AS SHADOWS, THAT ARE FILLED IN WITH BLACK INK ONLY. IF YOU'RE WORKING TRADITIONALLY, MARK SUCH AREAS WITH AN "X" AND FILL THEM IN DIGITALLY - YOU CAN SAVE A LOT OF INK THIS WAY!



VISUAL EFFECTS, SUCH AS ACTION LINES, ARE APPLIED DURING THE INKING STAGE.

THESE LINES CREATE A GREATER SENSE OF MOVEMENT WITHIN YOUR OTHERWISE STATIC ARTWORK. TO CONVEY WHICH DIRECTION YOUR CHARACTER IS HEADING, POINT GROUPS OF ACTION LINES IN THE DIRECTION OF THE MOTION UNIFORMLY.

ACTION LINES CAN BE ADDED TO A BACKGROUND, OR ATTACHED TO A CHARACTER OR OBJECT. THEY CAN BE HAND-DRAWN, BUT CSP COMES WITH TOOLS SPECIFICALLY FOR ACTION LINES: VERY USEFUL FOR CREATING NEAT ACTION LINES QUICKLY!



DECIDE AHEAD OF TIME WHETHER OR NOT YOUR COMIC NEEDS COLOUR, GREYSCALE, OR JUST INKS. CONSIDER HOW MUCH TIME IT WILL TAKE YOU TO USE EACH MEDIUM, AND THE LENGTH OF YOUR COMIC'S STORY.

BLACK AND WHITE/GREYSCALE COMIC PAGES TYPICALLY TAKE LESS TIME TO COMPLETE, WHEREAS USING FULL COLOUR CAN BE QUITE CHALLENGING AND TIME-CONSUMING, ESPECIALLY IF YOU'RE WORKING BY YOURSELF.

IF YOUR COMIC IS SHORT, YOU MAY HAVE AN EASIER TIME USING FULL COLOUR. LONG-FORM COMICS CAN TAKE MULTIPLE MONTHS - IF NOT YEARS - TO COMPLETE, AND FULLY COLOURING IT COULD EXTEND ITS PRODUCTION TIME.

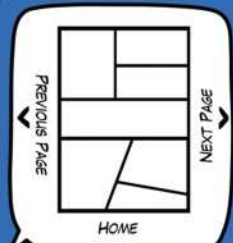
WORKLOAD CAN BE BETTER MANAGED IF YOU'RE WORKING AS PART OF A TEAM OF ARTISTS, INCLUDING A DEDICATED COLOURIST.

SIDENOTE: WEBCOMICS

THE WORLD OF WEBCOMICS HAS CHANGED SIGNIFICANTLY SINCE THE 90'S AND EARLY 00'S. NOWADAYS, WEBCOMIC ARTISTS HAVE A MULTITUDE OF COMICS PLATFORMS TO CHOOSE FROM, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR GETTING PUBLISHED OR SELF-PUBLISHED ARE MORE NUMEROUS THAN EVER. IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN SHARING YOUR COMICS ONLINE, IT'S WORTH CONSIDERING THE FOLLOWING BEFORE HITTING THE SHARE BUTTON:

FORMAT

PRESENTING A WEBCOMIC ONE PAGE AT A TIME HAS BEEN STANDARD UP UNTIL RECENT YEARS.



IT'S NOW VERY COMMON TO FIND WEBCOMICS THAT ARE GEARED ENTIRELY TOWARD MOBILE DEVICES.



PAGES ARE PRESENTED AS ONE LONG, UNBROKEN IMAGE, WHICH A MOBILE READER CAN EASILY SCROLL THROUGH.

WOULD THIS FORMAT WORK WELL FOR YOUR COMIC, OR WOULD YOU PREFER TO STICK TO THE STANDARD ONE-PAGE-AT-A-TIME FORMAT?

WHAT ARE THE MAXIMUM IMAGE DIMENSIONS YOUR CHOSEN PLATFORM ALLOWS? BEFORE YOU CAN UPLOAD, YOU'LL LIKELY HAVE TO RESIZE YOUR COMIC PAGES TO FIT. DON'T FORGET TO REDUCE THE PPI TO 72, AND TRIM OFF THE BLEED AREA - WEBCOMICS DON'T NEED THEM!

CAN YOUR COMIC'S TEXT BE CLEARLY READ ON SMALLER MOBILE SCREENS? BE SURE TO TEST THIS OUT AND MAKE ANY NECESSARY ADJUSTMENTS BEFORE POSTING!



ADDING SPEECH BUBBLES AND TEXT

SPEND SOME TIME SHOPPING AROUND FOR FONTS THAT WILL SUIT YOUR COMIC. COMICBOOKFONTS.COM AND BLAMBOT.COM ARE EXCELLENT RESOURCES!

CLASSIC COMIC STYLE FONT!

For a cute, handwritten look!

A BAD IDEA.



WILL YOUR COMIC INCLUDE SOUND EFFECTS? CONSIDER WRITING THEM BY HAND FOR EXTRA DYNAMISM.



SOME ARTISTS PREFER TO WRITE ALL OF THEIR COMIC'S DIALOGUE BY HAND. THIS CAN ACHIEVE A LOVELY PERSONAL FEEL, BUT LEGIBLE UPPERCASE HANDWRITING IS A MUST!

CSP'S SPEECH BUBBLE TOOLS MAKE THE CREATION OF TEXT BALLOONS VERY CONVENIENT.

USE THE ROUNDED AND ELLIPSE BALLOON TOOLS TO DRAW A BUBBLE WITH ONE STROKE, OR USE THE CURVE BALLOON TOOL TO DRAW ONE BY HAND.

USE THE OBJECT ARROW TO RESHAPE THE BUBBLES, AND CREATE A TAIL USING THE BALLOON TAIL TOOL.

MAKE USE OF CREATIVE BUBBLE SHAPES TO CONVEY DIFFERENT TYPES OF SPEECH TO THE READER. FOR EXAMPLE:

THINKING

SHOUTING!

WHISPERING

AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, TRY TO AIM THE END OF THE TAIL TOWARD THE SPEAKING CHARACTER'S MOUTH.

PLEASE DON'T EAT THE BUBBLE TAIL.



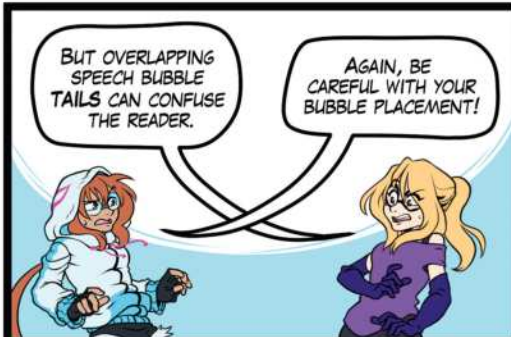
THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO USE BUBBLES FOR ADDED EFFECT. FOR EXAMPLE, OVERLAPPING SPEECH BUBBLES LIKE THIS-

IMPLIES THAT A CHARACTER HAS BEEN INTERRUPTED BY ANOTHER.



BUT OVERLAPPING SPEECH BUBBLE TAILS CAN CONFUSE THE READER.

AGAIN, BE CAREFUL WITH YOUR BUBBLE PLACEMENT!



DECIDING WHEN TO BREAK UP A SPEECH BUBBLE CAN HELP TO CONVEY WHAT THE CHARACTER IS FEELING. NATURAL BREAKS LIKE THIS, AT A COMMA OR A FULL STOP, IMPLY CALM SPEECH.

BREAKING IT UP

UM-

A LOT-

LIKE THIS-

IMPLIES NERVOUSNESS.



...AND THAT ABOUT COVERS THE PRACTICAL BASICS OF CREATING COMICS!

LASTLY, WE'RE GOING TO TOUCH ON SOME GENERAL CREATIVE ADVICE, SO I'M GONNA JUMP OVER TO THE NEXT PAGE REAL QUICK-



EXTRA TOUCHES:

DYNAMIC PANNELLING, PANEL BREAKING, MAKING USE OF THE BACKGROUND/PRINT AREA - THESE ARE JUST A FEW WAYS TO USE THE MEDIUM OF COMICS TO GREATER EFFECT. YOU CAN - AND SHOULD! - EXPERIMENT WITH YOUR OWN IDEAS. SO LONG AS LEGIBILITY IS MAINTAINED, YOU CAN GET AS CREATIVE AS YOU LIKE!

CONSIDER BALANCE BETWEEN WORD AND IMAGE. SOMETIMES, WORDS ARE ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY FOR COMMUNICATING THE NARRATIVE TO THE READER - AND SOMETIMES, THEY AREN'T NECESSARY AT ALL.

"A PICTURE SAYS A THOUSAND WORDS" AND ALL THAT!

CONSIDER STYLE

WHAT TYPE OF STYLE BEST SUITS THE STORY YOU'RE AIMING TO TELL WITH YOUR COMIC? WHAT IS YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE AND WHICH STYLES WOULD APPEAL TO THEM MOST? THERE ARE SO MANY DIFFERENT TYPES OF COMICS OUT THERE: SUPERHERO, POLITICAL, NEWSPAPER STRIPS, MANGA, GRAPHIC NOVEL - AND SO MANY MORE, ESPECIALLY IN WEBCOMIC SPACES. YOUR CHOSEN STYLE WILL INFLUENCE EVERY PART OF YOUR COMIC-MAKING PROCESS!

THERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN AND IMPROVE AT EVERY PART OF THE PROCESS, BE IT HUMAN ANATOMY, FACIAL EXPRESSIONS, ACTION, VISUAL STORYTELLING, BACKGROUNDS AND PERSPECTIVE - DRAWING COMICS WILL PUSH YOU TO IMPROVE IN MANY AREAS, SO NEVER FEEL THAT YOU ARE NOT GOOD ENOUGH TO START MAKING COMICS. THE BEST WAY TO LEARN HOW TO MAKE COMICS, IS TO MAKE COMICS.

FURTHER READING

THE SUBJECT OF COMICS IS A BROAD ONE. HERE IS A SELECTION OF PUBLICATIONS THAT COVER THE CREATION OF COMICS IN GREATER DETAIL:

UNDERSTANDING COMICS AND MAKING COMICS BY SCOTT MCCLLOUD
VANISHING POINT: PERSPECTIVE FOR COMICS FROM THE GROUND UP BY JASON CHEESEMAN-MEYER
MANGA IN THEORY AND PRACTICE BY HIROHIKO AKI
STAN LEE'S HOW TO DRAW COMICS THE MARVEL WAY BY STAN LEE

KEEP GOING!

AT SOME POINT WHILE MAKING YOUR COMIC, YOUR ART WILL IMPROVE TO THE POINT THAT YOU FEEL AN URGE TO GO BACK AND RE-DO THE EARLIER PAGES - IT'S OKAY, MANY COMIC ARTISTS GO THROUGH THIS - BUT PLEASE AVOID IT AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE!

CREATING A COMIC, AND SEEING IT THROUGH TO ITS COMPLETION, IS A MARATHON: IT WILL TAKE A LONG TIME, YOU WILL NEED TO PACE YOURSELF, AND SOMETIMES YOU WILL NEED TO TAKE BREAKS - AND THAT IS ABSOLUTELY OKAY! CREATING COMICS CAN BE UNEXPECTEDLY DEMANDING, IN TERMS OF BOTH WORKLOAD AND TECHNIQUE.

ArtRage Vitae

CREATE A FANTASY ILLUSTRATION

Twin artists **Raide and Leffie** reveal how they collaborated on this delightful scene inspired by their childhood art



Artist PROFILE

Raide and Leffie

LOCATION: Germany

Raide (@RaidesArt) and Leffie (@LeffiesArt) are twins with German and Portuguese roots. They are freelance illustrators with a passion for character art, and have collaborated with the likes of Ambient Design and HarperCollins. raiffiesart.com

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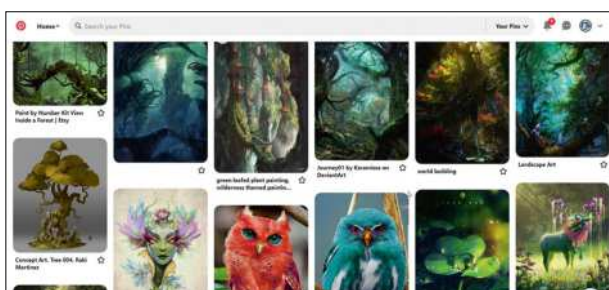


Together we collaborated on this project, and in this workshop we'll take you through our steps, from the initial ideas to the final edits. In this guide, you'll discover how we created a

fantasy illustration featuring an enchanted owl tree.

This project was inspired by our childhood artworks: we used to draw owls with matching presents on a large, magical tree. We recently found one of these older drawings and decided it'd be a nice idea to tackle

this concept again. The drawing was supposed to be very whimsical, so lighting played an important role. We will demonstrate which blend modes we use to create the enchanting lighting effects, and explain how we created unique character designs for the owls and their matching presents.



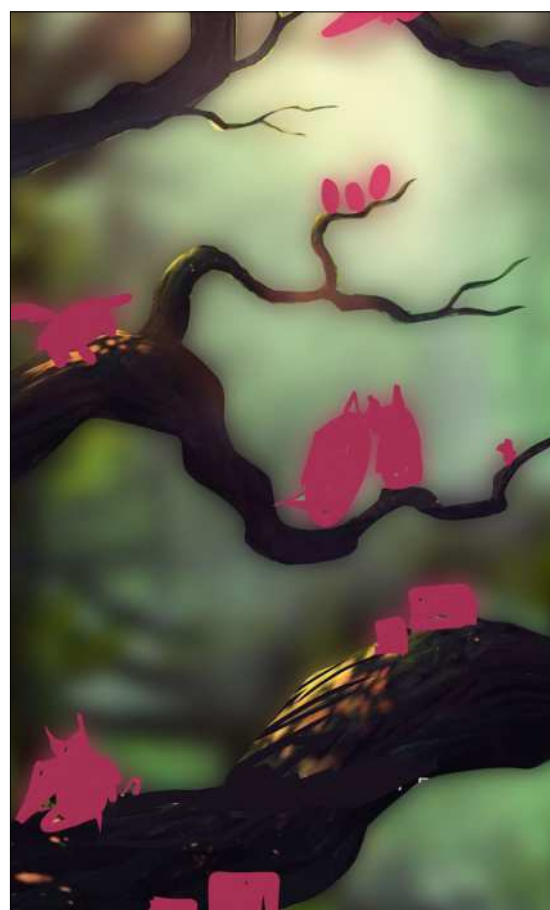
1 The idea and moodboard

For a children's book project we needed to create a populated forest scene. Browsing through our legacy sketch collections, recurring subjects were owls guarding their individual presents. We collaborated to expand these characters and developed them to bring the forest scene to life. After we have formed a general idea, we like to put together a moodboard. In this case, we saved inspirational images of forest concept artworks, photography and owl designs in a Pinterest board.



2 Thumbnail sketches

Based on those images, we created a series of small and quick drawings. We picked our favourite ones and used them as a guide to create a compositional sketch.



3 Colour key - colour scheme and lighting

With the composition in mind, we used different photos from our Pinterest board and edited them together to create a blueprint of our final piece. We used this edit as a reference for our palette. ➡➡

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

ARTRAGE VITAE

DEFAULT BRUSHES: PASTEL

Leffie likes to use this brush to add hints of texture to her artwork.

SOFT GRUNGE

Raide used this to create the silhouettes of some of the background trees.





4 Background base colours

After we were both happy with the blueprint, Raide started working on the background. She loaded the edited image from earlier into ArtRage as a reference. First, Raide used the lasso tool to outline the silhouettes of the main branches, and then used the paint roller to add the base colours.



5 Textures and custom brushes

For the woody texture of the large tree, Raide mainly used a pre-made custom brush called 'Bristle 6 Blend'. Although we wanted to focus on the foreground, it was important to us that the scene's background did not look lifeless. So, to add more interest to the forest setting, Raide created her own custom brushes with leaf-like brush heads. She tweaked the relevant settings, for example the dab spacing, in the Custom Brush Designer throughout the process.



6 Character design

Meanwhile, Leffie explored the character designs of the owls: she wanted each one to stand out and have its own uniquely wrapped present. So, Leffie created a sheet filled with different owl designs. She heavily focused on interesting silhouettes and body shapes. The paint roller was used on a layer below the lineart to quickly add large and bold strokes of colour. The paint roller itself mixes colours nicely together and thus makes it easier to find some interesting and pleasant hues. She made sure the owl's colour palettes worked with the overall green tone of the background, by placing a dark green base underneath the drawings.



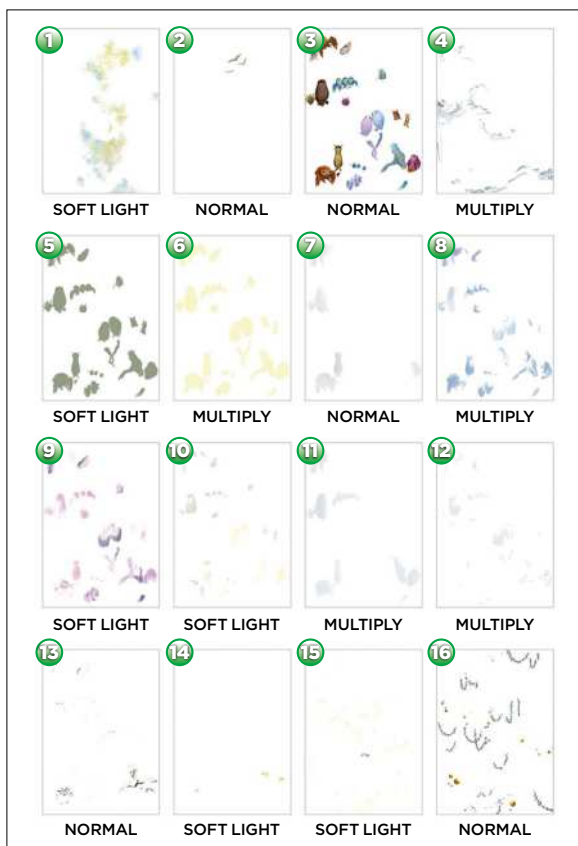
7 Size and placement

In order for Leffie to focus on the placement of the characters, she imported Raide's background on a single layer, and added a white layer on top. She set the opacity of this layer to around 80%, so she could still peek at the background. This setup helps her determine the sizes of the characters and their position within the composition.



8 Character shading and lighting

Leffie decided to add base colours with neutral shading first, before she proceeded with the final lighting. To blend the characters into the scene, she used different blend modes to her advantage. She enriched the shadows with a blue colour through the Multiply mode, and increased the brightness by using a yellow colour set to Soft Light. More layers with different blend modes were added to achieve a whimsical look.



9 Merging our files together

Next, Leffie prepared her ArtRage file in order to combine it with Raide's. To do this, she first merged as many layers as possible. For blend mode layers, she needed to make an exception and export them separately as PNGs, as they would otherwise lose their blend mode effect. Once everything is exported, Leffie named the files chronologically and made a note of which layer should have which blend mode. Raide then imported these PNGs into her ArtRage file, and proceeded to add the final effects.



10 Colour editing and final details

At this stage, we noticed that focus was still missing in the piece. To fix this, we made the two central owls larger. The final lighting was also designed to help guide the reader's eye; the strong yellow sunlight makes the two main owls glow, while the others remain in the shadows. Once happy with the final composition and lighting, we imported the piece into Photoshop to enhance the colours. The darker regions were given a blue tint, while the lighter ones became warmer. ●

Blender, Daz, KeyShot & Photoshop CREATE STRIKING ANIME-STYLE ART

Explore one of the methods art director **Tonton Revolver** uses to make a kickass, anime-inspired illustration



Artist PROFILE

**Tonton
Revolver**

LOCATION: France

Art director working in the video game and comic book industries. Some of my recent work includes Suicide Squad: Kill the Justice League, Assassin's Creed Valhalla, Far Cry, Todd McFarlane's Spawn and some unannounced IPs. www.artstation.com/tontonrevolver

**GET YOUR
RESOURCES**
See page 7 now!



Starting a piece of art can be pretty scary. Fear of failure, a blank sheet, losing patience, thinking that you are lacking skills or that you will never being able to reach the level of quality you are seeking.

Then there's the easy access to several tools, software, advertising, tutorials and videos that make you think you can become Yoji Shinkawa in five minutes. Things can all get pretty confusing very quickly, can't they? Okay, first things first. There is no such thing as a good or a bad tool, just like there is no software that will magically make you a 'concept artist' or an 'illustrator'. The magical tool does not exist, and no software that will make a good and

inspirational piece of art for you with the simple click of a button.

In my opinion, nothing can replace good old traditional art knowledge. But! There are some pieces of software that can help you in your journey, and get rid of some of your fears.

Still, keep in mind that you will have to find your own creative process and the tools that fit your mindset/art style, and trust me, it might take a while.

So, in this tutorial I will show you one of the many ways I create an illustration with a striking composition. This process is probably the one I use the most on a daily basis, using the help of 3D and 2D software to work productively and efficiently.

RESOURCES WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: HARD ROUND 2

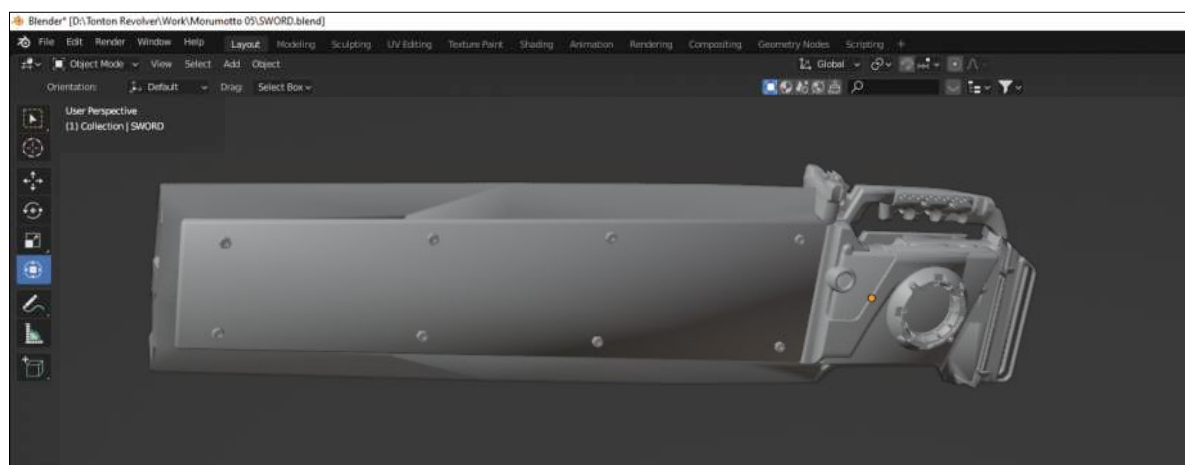
Perfect for linework, this brush is my go-to for digital inking!

HARD ROUND 3

A standard brush I am mostly using to paint flat colours with hard edges.

SOFT ROUND 300

A perfect brush for painting something with smooth edges.



1 The beginning

For me, the process of working on a personal piece is quite straightforward. To start, an idea of a character, story, or framing pops into my mind (in this case: a badass protagonist with a giant sword in the middle of an environment full of

pipes). Then I will start working on it without making any sketches. When it's a personal project, I am going straight into production and letting the creativity do the job.

The most important thing at this stage is to block out all the assets; in 3D, I will need to create my piece

without any constraints. Here I am modelling a very basic sword in Blender, to achieve the sense of shape/scale I am looking for. No fancy stuff, just a rough blockout.

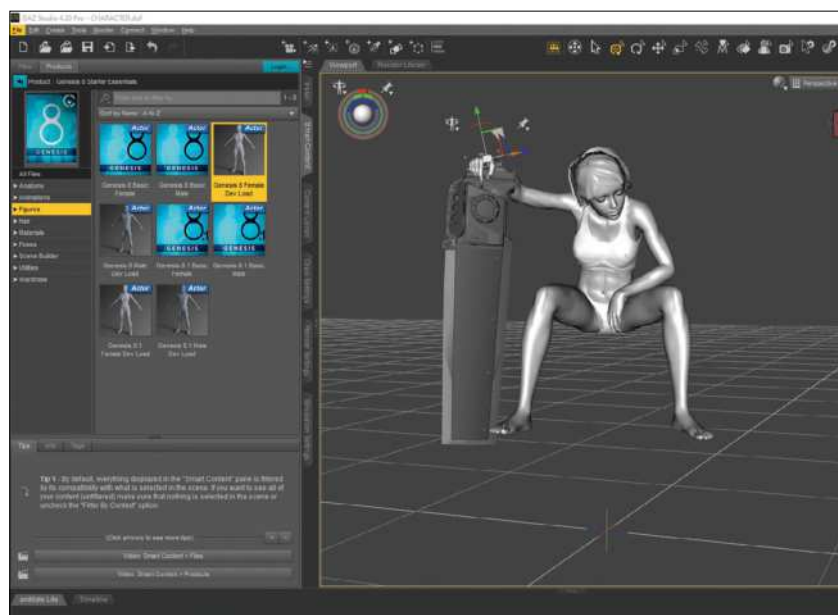
Once I am satisfied with the result, I export an OBJ of the sword and close Blender.



2 Daz model

I can now open Daz and export my sword next to a generic Daz female character (in this case, I'm using the Genesis 8 female figure). Daz is a pretty solid software, and it's free – I use it all the time when I need to pose a character efficiently in just a few clicks. ➡➡





3 Pose in Daz

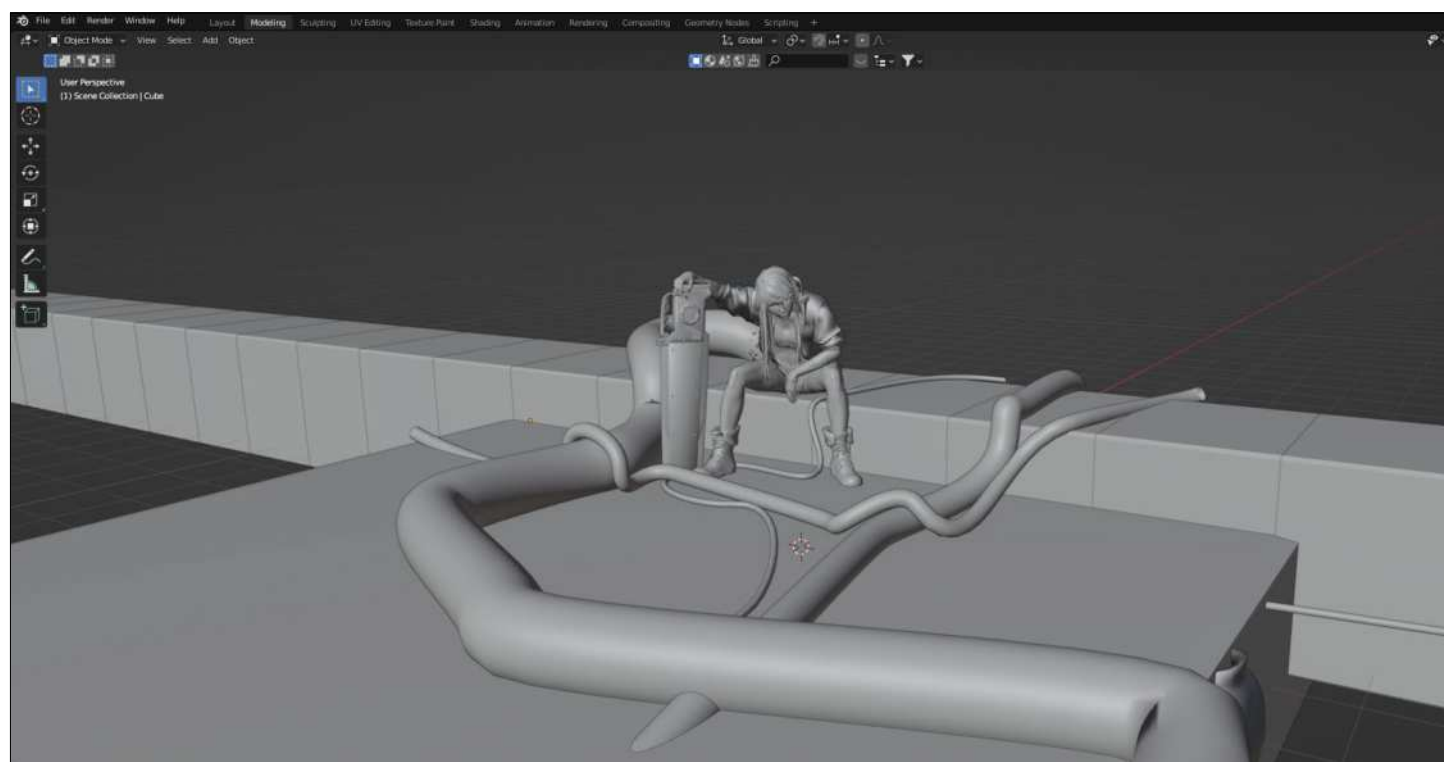
This is one of the most critical parts of the process: making the right pose, indicative of the attitude and mood I am aiming for. What I am looking for when I pose a character is always the same thing... and it's called 'MOTION'! Here, my take is to create the feeling that the character is about to move while she is sitting.

This step can take a while, because I like to keep it organic – you could consider it like a sort of sketch phase; I am moving the gizmo around to get the exact position I want, body part by body part, pixel by pixel. This posing is going to drive the entire flavour of the piece, so I have to be really picky about it. Once I am satisfied with the result, I export an OBJ of the scene (character + sword).



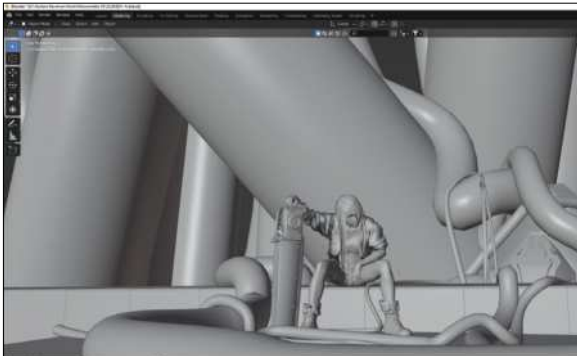
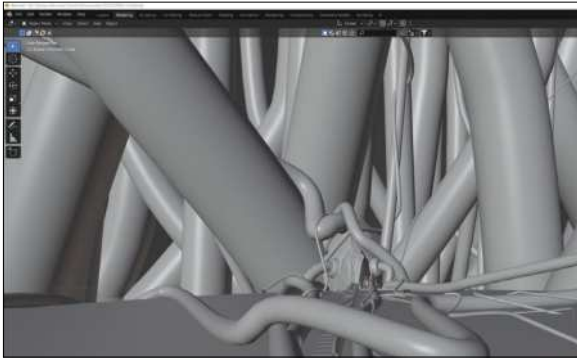
4 Back to Blender

I can now re-open Blender and import my Daz character. Once again I will start blocking out a few elements, this time on the top of my character. For the sake of efficiency and not wasting too much time in Blender, I decide to re-use some assets I did a while ago (in this case, a pair of shoes and a bomber jacket), dropping them on my character. Then I roughly move some polygons around with the sculpting tool to make my props fit with the anatomy and pose of my character.



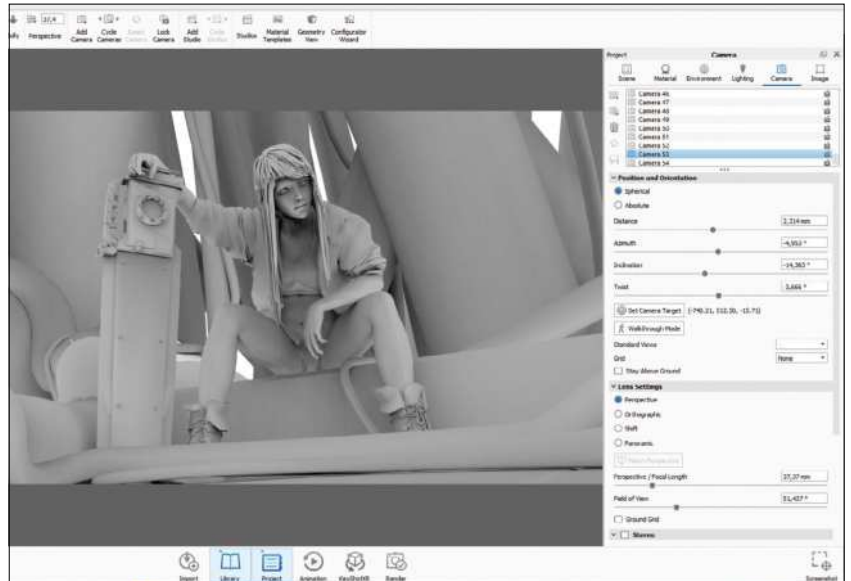
5 Environment - foreground

I can now start building my environment. This is a pretty straightforward step: here I am blocking out my foreground using basic cubes. Then, I create some pipes by using the Bezier curve tool, shaping them one by one and making them follow the shape of my initial blockout, and trying to obtain the sense of motion I am aiming for.



6 Environment – background

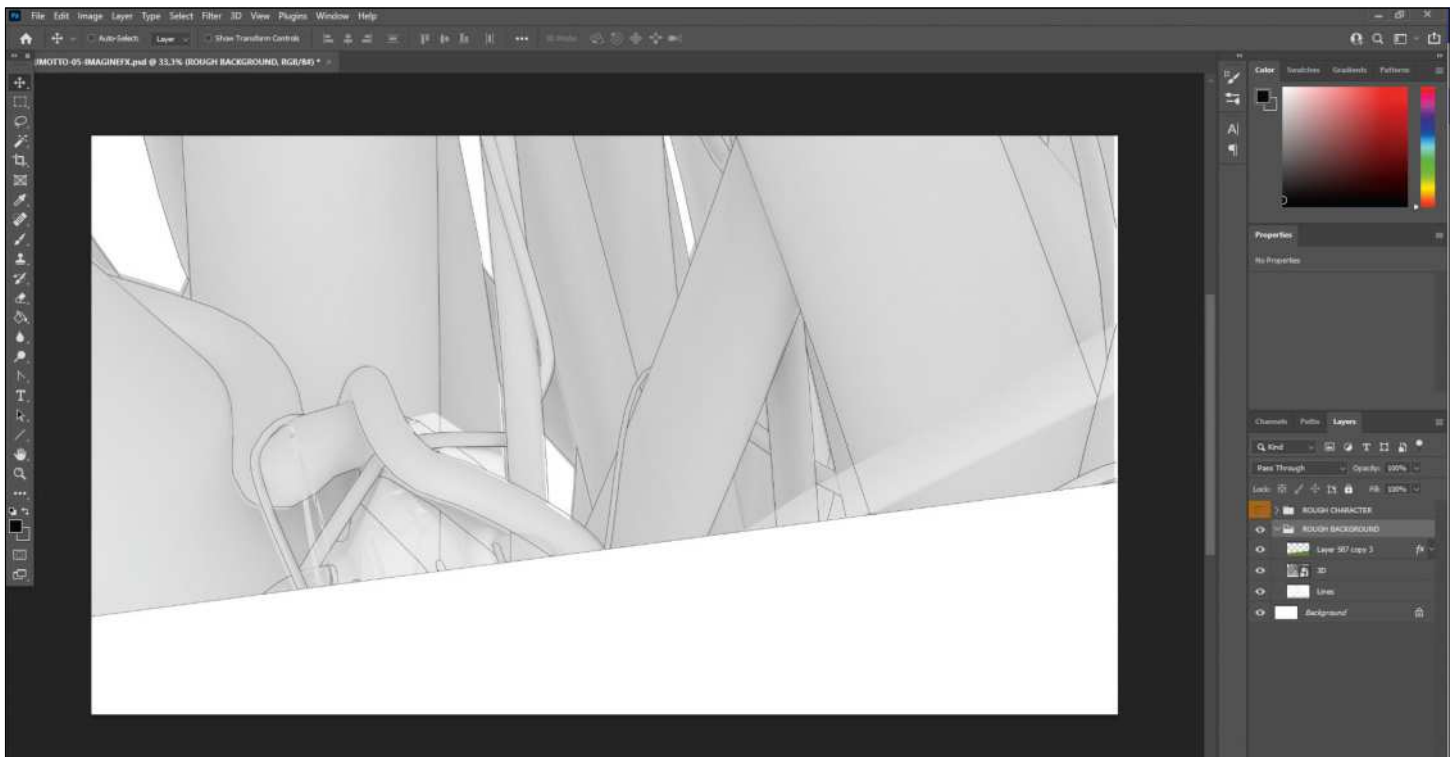
There are a lot of tools in Blender that can help you speed up the creation of this kind of environment. But what I personally love the most is to handcraft all my props – making, on purpose, a few ‘mistakes’ that are going to make my scenery feel more organic and ‘alive’.



7 Frame in KeyShot

Next, I am importing the OBJ of the scene I did in Blender and then moving my KeyShot camera into my scene, tweaking FOV, Focal Length, Distance, and so on – once again pixel by pixel – then tweaking the camera to reach the perfect framing for my illustration. This part can take a while for me, because even if I always have a pretty clear idea of the framing I am looking for, I like the fact that by moving my camera around I can sometimes get fresh and even better framing than what I had in mind in the first place.

You can, of course, do the same thing in Blender, but in my opinion the camera tool from KeyShot is much more friendly. I can now render two separate 4k screenshots, one for the background and one for the foreground.



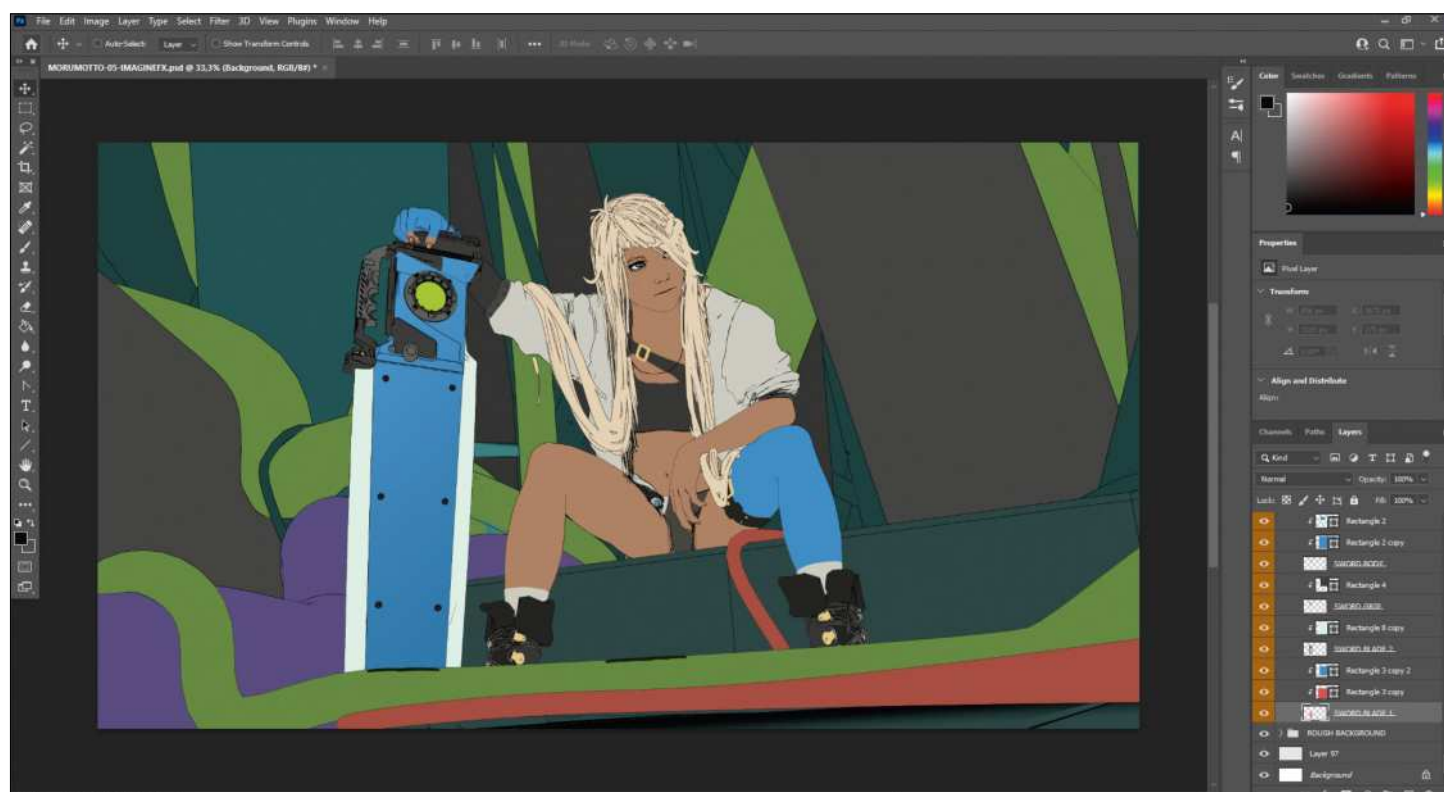
8 Linework in Photoshop – background

I am now importing my KeyShot renders in Photoshop, then creating two layer groups. One is called ‘Rough Character’ which is our ‘Foreground’ we did previously, and the other is going to be for the ‘Background’. I am always separating background and foreground – this kind of mindset can save your life, trust me. I can now roughly trace over my 3D model, using a two pixel-sized brush and a new layer. ➡➡



9 Linework in Photoshop – foreground

I am now using the exact same process as the one in the previous step. Keep in mind that my goal at this stage is just to get an overall sense of the shape language and a strong foundation, so I am not going to spend too much time on the linework quality and the details.



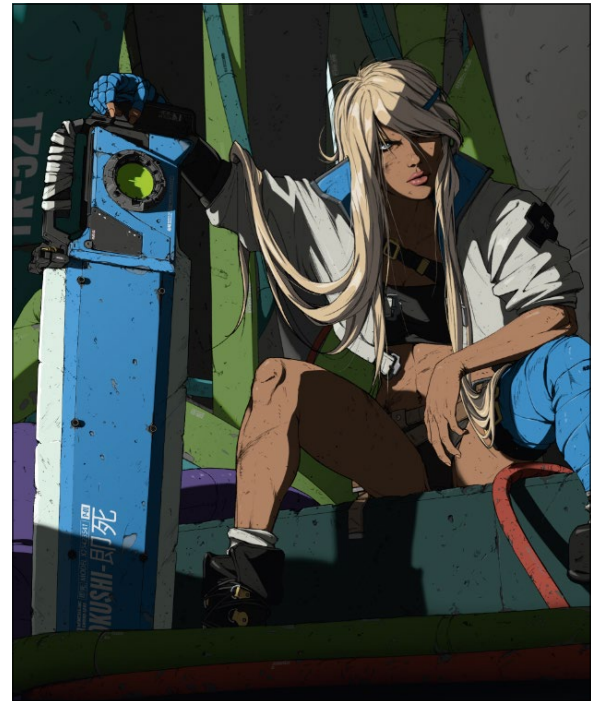
10 Colour scheme

My rough linework is done. I can now start adding flat colours, prop by prop, part by part (pipes, legs, arms, shoes, sword parts, etc...) and define the perfect colour grading. Each colour is separated on a different layer, so I can tweak every single colour independently.



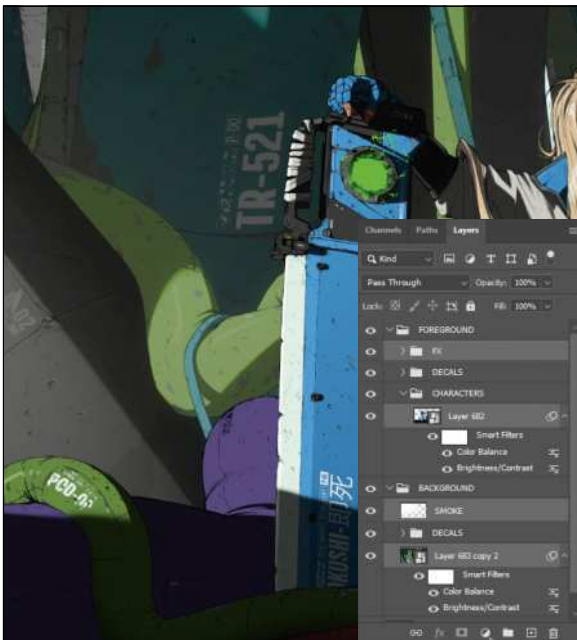
11 Add shadows

Once I am happy with my colour scheme, I merge the layer of my foreground and my background but still keep them separate. Here I am creating two layers (in Multiply mode), one for the background and another one for the foreground, and start painting my shadows on each of them using a full black colour and two basic brushes (a hard round brush and an aerograph brush).



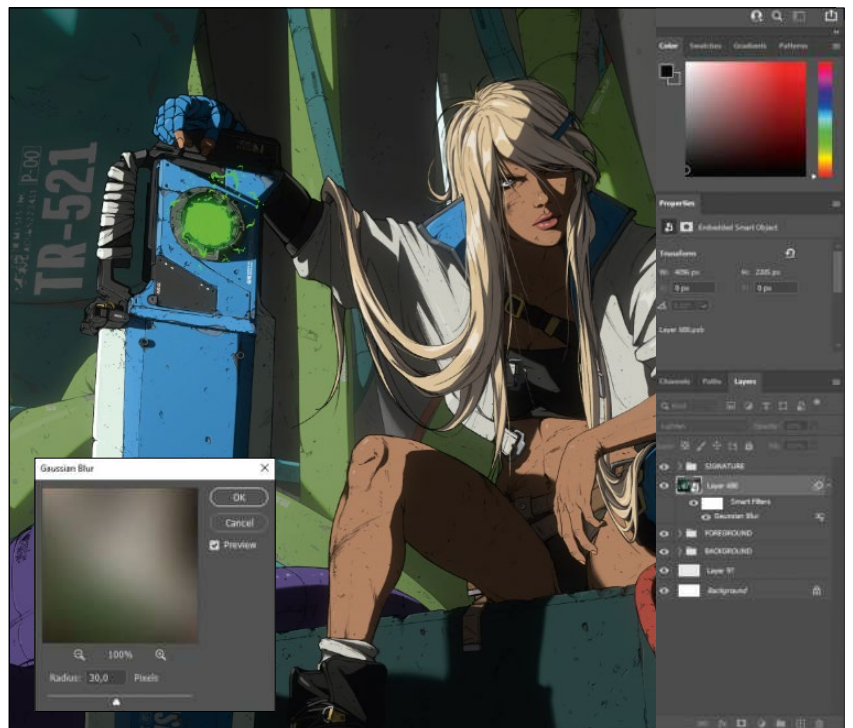
12 Paint and polish

Now I have everything I need to get this scene done! At this stage it's just about painting, painting, painting, tweaking, fixing, and adding details like decals, splatters and scratches. There is no secret technique for this step: patience, dedication and experience will be your best tools to achieve what you want.



13 Calibrate whole scene

The painting step is now complete. Next I am tweaking my colour grading here and there on my background and my foreground by using 'Colour Balance' and 'Brightness/Contrast'. I am also adding a bit of smoke on the background to help the separation between the foreground and background, to make my piece more readable.



14 Fake a global illumination

Almost done! This is the very final touch, here I am duplicating all my layers, merging them, and converting them into a smart object. Open the Gaussian Blur filter, fix the Radius to 30 pixels and put this layer in Lighten mode. This simple trick is going to fake some sort of a global illumination. ●

Traditional

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134. Gradients and how to use them

James Gurney shares his top tips and demonstrates some handy methods for painting smooth gradients

140. Comic book hero in watercolours

US illustrator Ben Harvey walks you through his painting process that combines traditional mediums with a digital sketch to create a portrait

146. Create art with emotional impact

Francois Gautier explains the creative process he goes through when he brings his emotions to life

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Charlie Pickard continues his series of quick tips on anatomy to improve your figure drawing

154. 25 tips for dynamic fantasy scenes

Ralph Horsley breaks down his oil painting process into 25 expert tips



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Space Jockey, oil. Note the gradient from warm to cool in the sky and from light to dark on the side of the ship. There are many other smaller gradients throughout this composition.



Watercolour

Acrylics

Gouache

Casein

GRADIENTS AND HOW TO USE THEM

JAMES GURNEY shares his top tips and demonstrates some handy methods for painting smooth gradients and applying them to practical uses

We're often asked to paint flat swatches in art school, but colours really come to life when they change gradually from one note to another. Unfortunately, smooth gradients aren't that easy to paint. I'll share a few different approaches and show how I apply them in specific paintings. The idea is to encourage you to try controlled experiments in the studio and then apply what

you've learned in the field or on the job. I'll be using watercolour, gouache, casein and acrylic, but the painting insights shown here are universal and will benefit oil and digital painters as well.

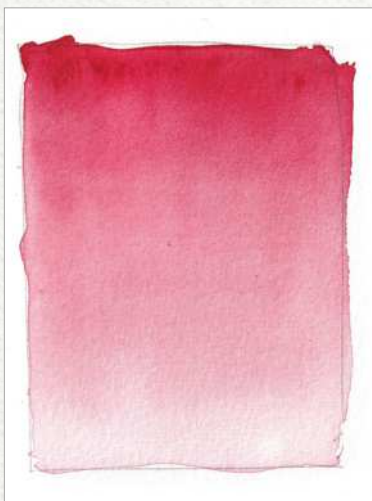


James Gurney authored *Color and Light, How to Paint What Doesn't Exist* and *Dinotopia*. He has 450k YouTube subs, 224k on Instagram, and has published over 5k posts on the GurneyJourney blog. jamesgurney.com



1 Make a simple watercolour gradient

Use heavy watercolour paper and a soft brush. Dampen the entire surface with water, without pooling. Tilt it to even it out. Load the brush with paint and start at the top. Pigment should travel. Add water to dilute the mixture while removing excess liquid from the brush with a rag. Tilt the paper to get pigment to flow in the direction you want. Remove excess buildup of water at the bottom of the painted rectangle with a thirsty brush, to avoid backruns. Try it with various pigments to see what they do.



2 Try stippling

This is an old-school method used for matte paintings, murals, and landscape painting. Use at least two brushes: a badger blender and a soft round brush. Dampen surface first. Loosely and thickly brush in the stripes of colours. Rapidly tap the surface with a badger hair blender or other flat-tipped soft brush. The brush will carry little dots randomly around to blend the areas. For large, smooth gradients, use a separate blender brush for each transition. A stipple gradient is easier in oil than it is in gouache, acrylic or casein because oil dries so much more gradually, allowing more working time.

“For large, smooth gradients, use a separate blender brush for each transition”



3 Brushed gradient, background first

Using a ruler, or freehand, start by drawing a horizontal rectangle. Create a leaf shape within it – this can be done freehand or by using a compass or dinner plate. Next, you need to lightly dampen the paper to make it receptive. Paint a brushed gradient, starting with the background and painting the 'leaf' second. Change the mixture of paint as you move across an area. Remember what's in the brush at a given time. Use a clean brush if you need pure white or pure black. ➡➡



4 *Foreground first, then background*

Paint another leaf shape below that. Use a stipple gradient on the leaf first. Paint the background second, cutting the edge of the shape from the outside in. Materials include: pencil, compass or dinner plate 9" or 10" (22 to 25cm) in diameter, brush, ivory black and titanium white gouache, water cup, rag, ruler. If you do this exercise and the one before, it will help you practise making shapes with the foreground first, then the background and vice versa.

5 *Paint leaves on an overcast day*

These densely crowded fern fronds on an overcast day appealed to me for studying soft gradients of light and shadow. The local colour was fairly uniform on the ferns. As a result, the changes in value were the result of changes in the angle of the forms in relation to the sky, and also the degree to which they were overshadowed or occluded by fronds above them. Look for a similar grouping of leaves or ferns, and as you analyse the changes in tone, paint it with transparent gradients or brushed or stippled opaque gradients.

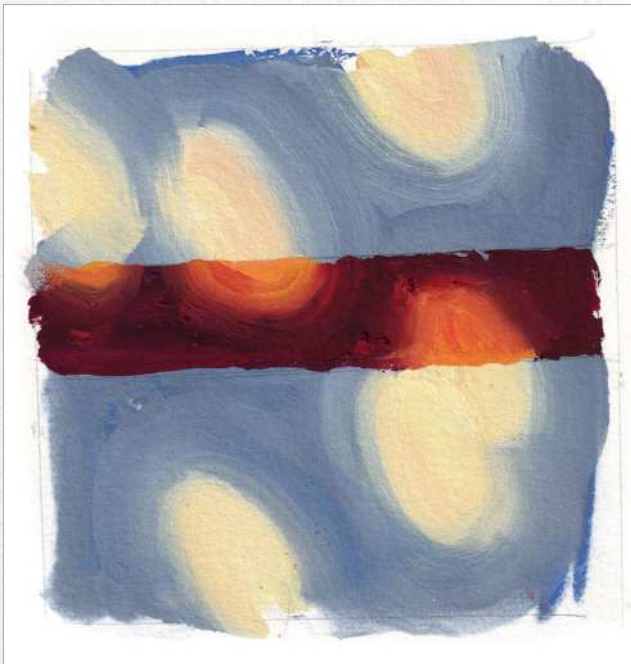


6 Parallel gradients

When two colour sets move together in the same direction, I call it a parallel gradient, such as in this banded cylinder. The red and blue bands and the white cylinder all move from light/warm to dark/cool. Draw the cylinder on watercolour paper freehand or use a large ellipse template. Draw the edges of the bands going around the cylinder. Paint the base tone of the cylinder quickly, blending the gradient from light to shadow. Then paint the red band and the blue band, changing the colour from light to shadow in the same way that you did for the 'white' base colour.



“Paint the base tone, blending the gradient from light to shadow”



7 Create an in-brush gradient

An in-brush gradient takes place within the width of a single brush. Use a 1" soft, flat brush for this exercise. Use two additional brushes, one for each of the colours you'll be blending. Mix the two colours and place them adjacent on the palette. Using the large brush, pick up one colour with one side and the other colour with the other side of the brush. Pull the stroke slowly, letting the gradient happen between the two colours. Turn the brush in your fingertips as needed. Always remember which colour was on which side of the brush.



8 Paint cloud shadows in a landscape

Start by painting a bird's eye view of clouds moving over a landscape, casting soft-edged shadows on the ground below. Inside the patches of light, everything is a little warmer and higher in value. That shift happens both to the green grass and the lighter grey road. Try to paint the transitional gradients as simply as possible, using large brushes and moving quickly. Use an in-brush gradient if you can. On a cloudy day the patches of light transition smoothly into shadow. ➡➡





9 Prime a surface

A brayer gradient gives you one of the smoothest transitions with physical paint. Use water-based block printing ink for the right sticky consistency, but mix in some acrylic paint to get the paint layer to seal when it dries. The purpose here is to prime a page of a sketchbook or a smooth panel with an underpainting for gouache. To get good coverage, blend the paint with the brayer on a piece of glass. Make sure to use fairly smooth paper, as if the paper is too rough there will be white spots not covered by the paint.



10 Step by Step: Create the checkerboard cylinder illusion



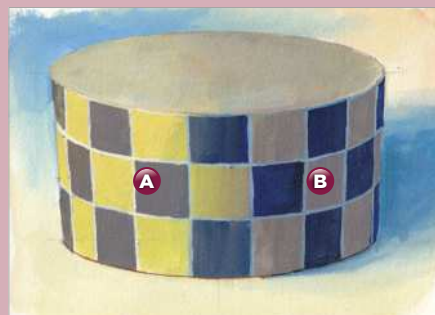
1 PAINT THE LIGHT TONES

First, draw the cylinder with pencil on watercolour paper. When you're ready to paint, use the following colours: cobalt blue, ultramarine blue, cadmium yellow medium, raw sienna, red oxide, quinacridone red, ivory black, titanium white, and neutral grey (about equal to Pantone 424C). Paint the gradients for the light tones first. While painting the cylinder, paint the background tones and cast shadow, too.



2 WORK ON THE DARK SQUARES

When those passages are dry, it's time to paint the darker squares. The cylinder appears to be lit from the left with a warm light and cool shadows. The light yellow squares become darker and cooler as they transition to the shadow side, becoming a neutral grey. The dark squares also become darker and cooler as they go into shadow. In the light they become that same neutral grey.



3 ADD ACCENTS AND HIGHLIGHTS

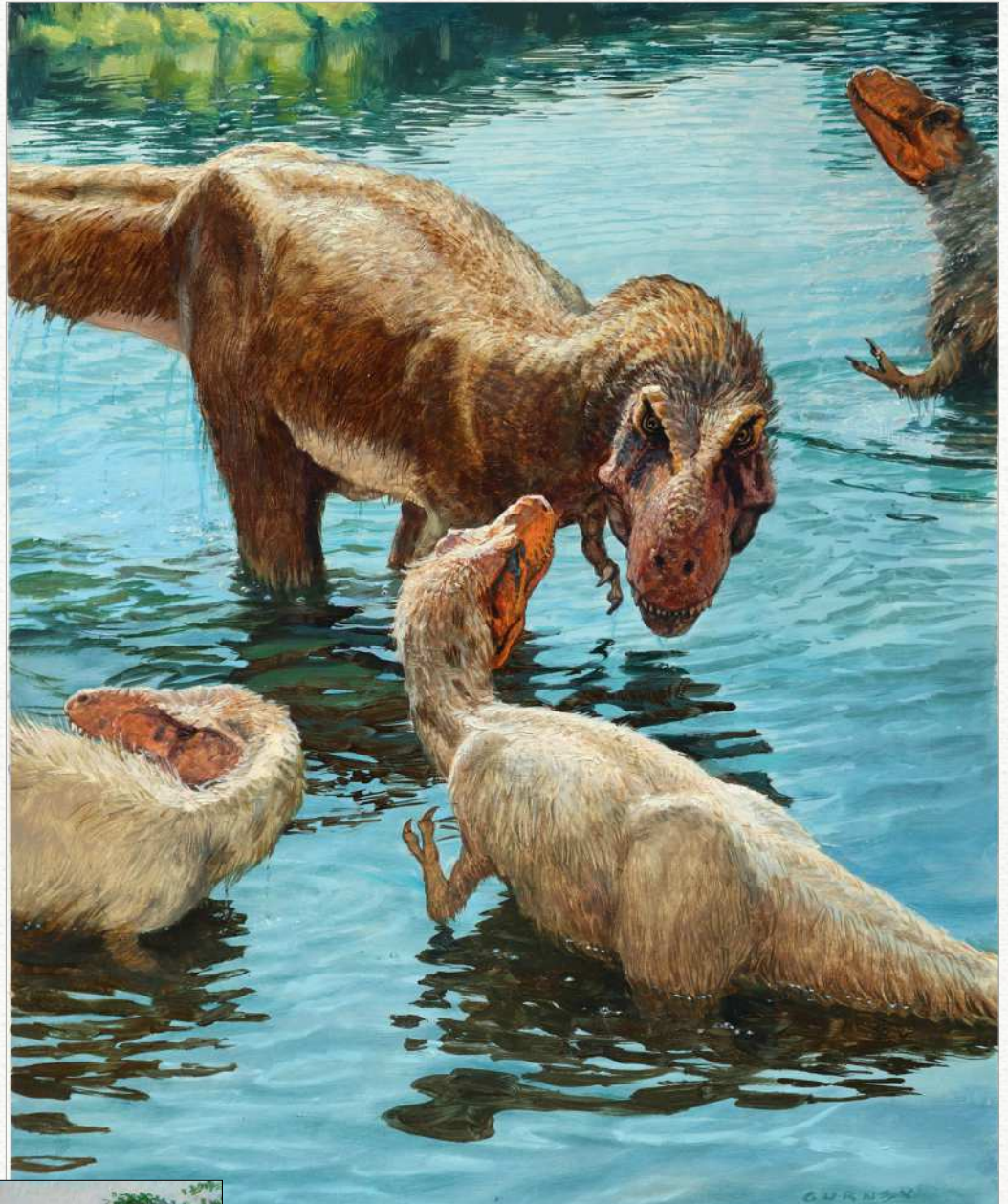
If you want, you can add a thin white line between the squares. In the finished checkerboard cylinder the dark square in light (A) is the exact same colour as the light square in shadow (B). Even though you previously painted it with the same mixture of paint, it's hard to believe - this is because our visual system is trying to correct for what it believes to be changes in lighting environments.



11 Use a global gradient for a city scene

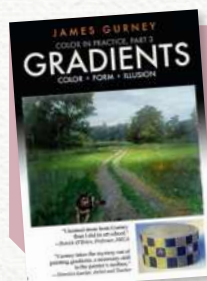
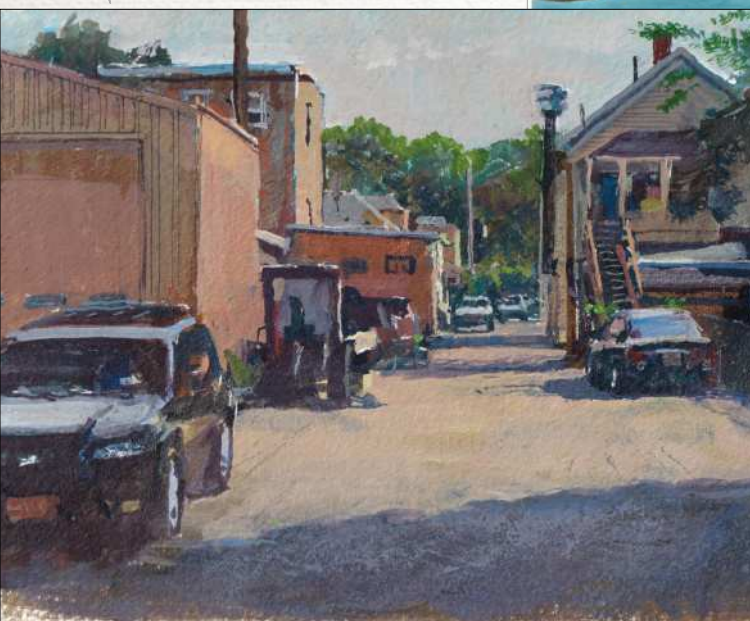
This plein-air study uses a brayer gradient as the priming colour under everything else. The gradient shifts from blue at the top to warm grey at the bottom. It's a reminder that the upper elements in a picture are more influenced by the cool sky, and the bottom elements are influenced by the warm ground. After carefully measuring my drawing, I block in the big shapes with a long, flat brush and gradually refine the details. The priming colour influences all the colours that I place over it, even though the top colours are opaque.

“The gradient shifts: blue at the top to warm grey at the bottom”



12 Look for interrupted gradients

In water, there's often a gradient that goes from light at the top to dark at the bottom. That large gradient is interrupted by wave action. Using oil paint, I set up the base colour gradient to represent the front planes of the wavelets, the parts of the waves more perpendicular to my line of vision. Then I paint the planes on the backside of each wavelet so that those planes are a little lighter. While all the strokes are wet, I soften a lot of the edges to make the tones flow into each other.



James Gurney's newest video tutorial from Gumroad is called *Gradients: Color, Form, Illusion*. It walks you through the making of all the art that appears in this article. Angela Sung (VisDev & Art Direction) said: "I never knew gradients could be accomplished simply... I cannot wait to try out these techniques and experiment with my future landscapes."

gurneyjourney.gumroad.com/l/EICti



Original character © The Rocketeer Trust



Watercolour Gouache

COMIC BOOK HERO IN WATERCOLOURS

US illustrator **BEN HARVEY** walks you through his painting process that combines traditional mediums with a digital sketch to create a portrait of the Rocketeer

When I first decided to take my craft seriously I knew I needed to branch out into the world of colour theory. This terrified me. Growing up, I was trained primarily in drawing. Occasionally, I was exposed to various painting mediums, but came away thinking they were too cumbersome to handle. Finally, I decided that watercolour would be the most approachable of the lot to get into. The paints last longer than acrylic or oil and it's far more portable when doing plein air work.

Watercolour behaves like no other medium. It can be unforgiving at times while yielding effects and textures that are wholly unique. Maintaining a careful balance of water and pigment is the most difficult aspect to master. Persistence

MATERIALS

WATERCOLOR

- Mix of Van Gough
- Kuretake Gansai Watercolor Sets

GOUACHE

- Holbein Artists Gouache

BRUSHES

- Escoda Perla synthetic brushes 12, 8, 2/0, 1, 0 Liner brush
- Princeton Art wash brush #1

PAPER

- Frabiano Artistico 300lb (640gsm) Watercolor board

PEN

- Uni-Ball Signo White Gel Pen

SOFTWARE

- Clip Studio Paint

is key, along with curbing the urge to oversaturate your brush.

Colour shape, form and values should be prioritised along with careful brush strokes to avoid creating a muddy, asymmetrical appearance. The success of your washes depend on the watercolour paper you're using. I find that a cheaper, cellulose-based paper is much more forgiving when it comes to adjustments compared to a higher quality, cotton-based paper, which can have a death grip on the pigments used.

Over time I was exposed to gouache as a secondary medium. This combines the opaque qualities that acrylic and oil offer with the added benefit of being water soluble, similar to watercolours. I enjoy how it enables me to fix or add as I progress through a piece. The mix of both watercolour and gouache

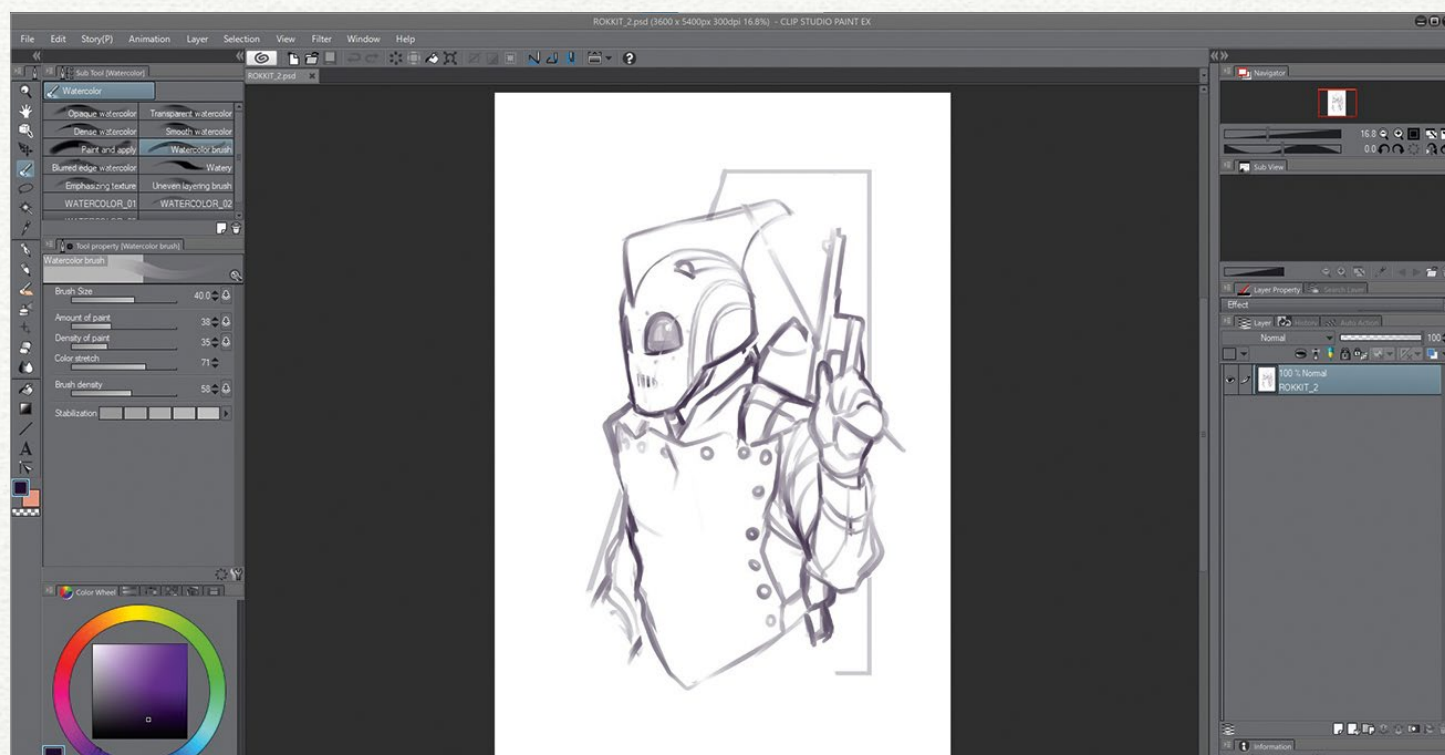
combined with a few other mediums makes for a diverse set of tools that can be utilised to tackle even the most advanced of pieces.

In this tutorial, we'll go over creating a portrait from concept sketches to finished piece using traditional and modern digital techniques. Also covered are my methods for gathering reference to achieve a more realistic pose to your character, as well as improving accuracy to the source materials.

I hope that you find this tutorial helpful on your journey to finding the mediums that fit well into your tool arsenal and wish you much luck in your future endeavours.



Ben is an illustrator hailing from the US. His clients include IDW Publishing, Valiant Entertainment, BOOM! Studios and IMAGE Comics. Explore his art at benharveyart.com. ➤➤



1 *Gathering reference materials and digital rough layouts*

I start by hopping on to Pinterest to search for inspiration, as well as reference materials for the character. Next, I open Clip Studio Paint to start the digital concept process. This is the most challenging part of my process because the number of poses and angles is nearly unlimited. In this instance, I decide to try something fun with my backdrop that complements the angles created by the character's pose.



2 *Printing on to watercolour board*

Once I've finalised my layout, I'll faintly print my layout directly in non-photo blue onto 300lb (640 gsm) Fabriano Watercolor board using my Epson printer. Printing directly onto the board enables me to use a wider variety of paper mediums with a heavier weight. This also reduces the amount of pencil abuse on the board, which can lead to deterioration.



3 *Refining and adjusting*

Next I go over my printout with graphite to finalise and further tighten the figure. In this case, I've decided to rotate the character's head so that he's looking more toward the viewer. Working off of a printout gives me the luxury of being able to modify and correct before proceeding into colour.



4 *Using your references*

Here's a good example where I notice the hand of the figure could use some quick adjusting. I grab my prop gun and use it as a live model to identify where the fingers should be. Very useful when in a pinch. I'll often use myself as a model, taking several reference photos of myself to help figure out more advanced poses.



5 *Masking the backdrop*

A backdrop helps make my figure stand out from the white paper. I mask the area with 3M's low-tack painter's tape, then use my Exacto knife to remove the unwanted tape, making sure not to press too hard where I cut into the paper.



6 *Prepping for initial wash*

With my mask in place, I do an initial underpainting to set my tone or value. I gently apply a light and even layer of clean water to the character's body. When you put water on the paper you want to see a sheen, not a puddle of water. I also take note of where the brightest parts of his costume are. I'll mark those areas in pencil so that they don't get lost in the process.



7 *Apply an underpainting wash*

It's best to prepare your paints as much as possible before continuing in this step. Speed is essential. While keeping the entire prepped area on the character wet I'll strategically apply areas of warm and cool pigments. Keep these parts light and loose. You don't want too much definition here. The randomness in your paint patterns will help in later steps. ➤



8 *More tone and value*

I go into the figure with more tone and value over my initial underpainting wash. Working in watercolour means that, because of the natural transparency of the medium, your underpainting can help set new layers of paint to be either in the warm or cool tonal range. This makes the decision-making process much easier.



9 *Tone and value continued*

As I progress I keep in mind where my highlights are on the costume of the character, while adding more value and tone without overcomplicating things. This stage is where I lack the most confidence – I constantly worry about the current look of the piece as well as the various forthcoming steps.



10 *Creating highlights on the helmet*

The helmet part of his costume is a challenge. It's easy to become lost while trying to assess the patterns of highlights and reflections when painting metallic objects. It also doesn't help that there isn't a live model to work from. My main goal is not to overcomplicate or muddy what I've already put down. Less is more when it comes to brushstrokes.



11 *Correction methods*

When it comes to corrections, I find that it's best to catch these areas early on. A problem area that's had more than an hour to dry on cotton paper will be a burden to lift off. However, an area that's relatively fresh can be re-moistened and dabbed with a towel.



12 Adding details

At this point, I've got most areas of the piece figured out and finally breathe a sigh of relief that I can see the light at the end. The time has come to begin tightening the forms and adding details. This is one of the most enjoyable parts of the entire process for me.



13 Tightening forms

To bring more definition to the piece, I'll grab a small liner brush and go around the edges of the various forms in either a matching or higher tonal value. Doing this can create some interesting effects like a glow and highlights. Then, using a small amount of gouache, I'll add additional highlights or corrections if needed.



14 Making final touches

As the dust settles I'll go around the piece with a Uni-Ball Signo white gel pen to bring back any highlights that may have been lost in the painting process. I'll also use a kneaded eraser to clean up any remaining graphite. ●





GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 7 now!

Ink

CREATE ART WITH EMOTIONAL IMPACT

FRANÇOIS GAUTIER explains the creative process he goes through when he brings his emotions to life using black and gold ink

Art, in all its forms, is for me the best way to convey a message or an emotion. And in traditional black ink drawing, I've found the perfect way to convey my emotions is by playing with shapes and symbols, and by drawing on the imagery that surrounds me, such as cinema, comics, horror, tattooing, video games and much more.

I want to create a composition that evokes the sense of rebuilding oneself, despite wounds and sadness, and thus being able to move forward.

In this workshop, I'll teach you how I draw on one of my emotions, thoughts or even fears, and transform it into an illustration, enabling me to confront it.

I'm going to take you through the different stages that I go through, starting with the very first idea, the

MATERIALS

PAPER

■ Cason A4, 224g, natural white, fine grain

BLACK PEN

■ Mitsubishi Uni Pin Fine Line, 0.03/0.05/0.1

GOLD PEN

■ Mitsubishi Uni-ball Signo

sketches, research, composition, shading, the final realisation and even the way I stage my drawings to take pictures of them. I'll also go into detail about some of my techniques, as well as the material I use to compose my works.

GOLDEN TOUCH

When making a drawing by hand, I work exclusively in ink, sometimes with a few touches of gold. I really like conveying emotions and messages through the symbolism of what I represent, as well as the composition and combinations that I give them, rather than through colour. I use gold ink to highlight certain details of my drawings and this brings a precious dimension to the whole.

Regarding the materials I use, for this composition I'll use black fineliners, mostly the finest possible

(0.03) to enable me to go into as much detail as I can.

Sometimes I even try my hand with a magnifying glass. The technique used here is hatching. It works really well with this kind of pen, and I feel it brings character to my artwork.

It also enables me to work delicately, to bring the volumes and textures that I want. My compositions are mainly based on symmetry and proportions. This means that I also regularly use rulers or even compasses, in order to place each element as accurately as possible on the sheet, and to offer something satisfying to the eye.



François works almost exclusively in black ink. He draws inspiration from metal music, horror, fantasy, manga and games. See more of his art at [instagram.com/francois.gautier.art](https://www.instagram.com/francois.gautier.art).





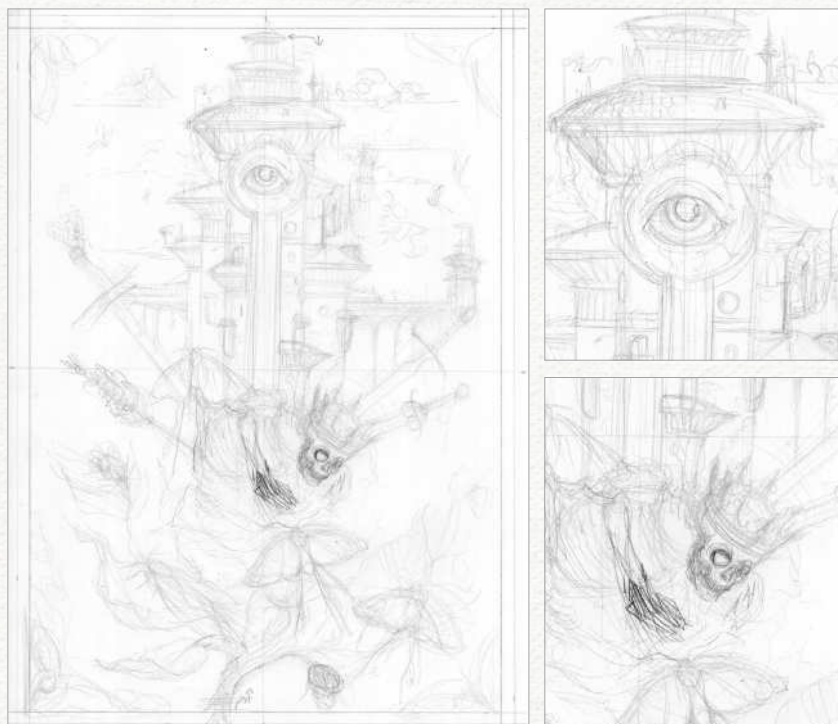
1 Birth of an idea

The very first step in my compositions comes from the desire to represent an emotion that I've felt. Very often, I write them down in notebooks, then bring them out later and try to bring them to life on paper. And for that, I use a lot of symbolism and vivid representations.



2 Development and research

After choosing the basic subject of the project and making some quick sketches, I look for symbols that can correspond to the theme in question. That could be insects, animals, shapes or materials. I also regularly revisit my notebooks to gain inspiration from past ideas that might work here.



3 Exploring compositions

Once the different elements are chosen and the overall idea fixed, the moment comes to compose the realisation. The goal here for me is to work in symmetry, with volumes that are well distributed, and for the overall composition to be harmonious. I never embark on a final piece of artwork without having fixed the composition beforehand.



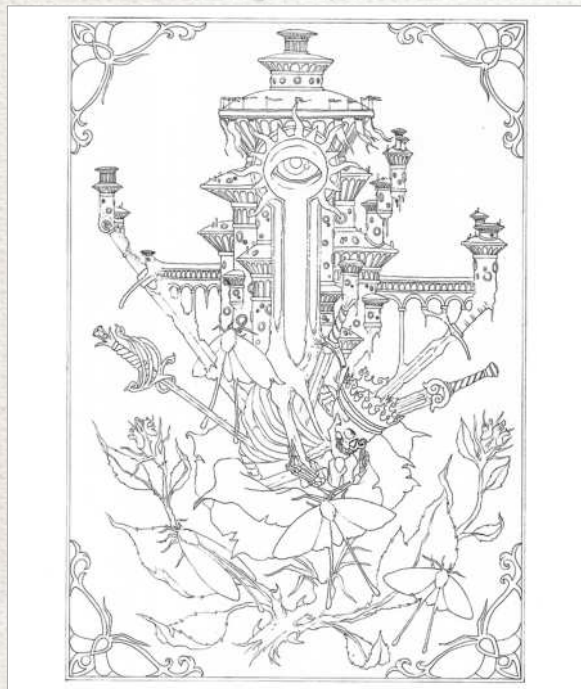
4 Refining the elements

When the bulk of the composition is fixed, I go over it more precisely and finely, in order to get into the details. The advantage of a pencil is that it enables me to draw lightly several times in the same place to create the exact shape I want to give to a line or a curve. Once this is perfect, I mark it more strongly.



5 *Frame and ornamentation*

I like to place my drawing in a frame; I find that it emphasises it and freezes it. I try to echo the main piece in my framing, by reusing similar shapes or objects. Here, for example, the butterflies are a perfect shape for angles, and are reminiscent of the butterflies that are present on the main drawing.



6 *Inking my line-art*

All the sketching steps are finally complete, letting me know exactly what I want to do, so I can start inking. I don't work on the same paper as the sketch, but on a new, thicker sheet. A light box enables me to trace my sketch, so my sheet is as clean as possible. I start with the main contours, using a 0.05 black fineliner.



7 *Varying the line thickness and black areas*

In my work, some parts are more important than others, and I like to highlight these. For this I use a thicker fineliner (here I've used 0.1) to bring them out. I also take this opportunity to fill in the areas that I know will be black, to see them as quickly as possible. ➡➡



8 Establishing the light source

Light is important when working in black and in a fairly realistic style. It enables me to create volume, to emphasise certain parts, and to give a sense of foreground and background. It's therefore at this point that I decide where my light source comes from, and when I settle on the main areas of shadow.



9 Details and textures

I really like details. This is why I use very fine pens. They enable me to create the most delicate of marks. I use my 0.03 fineliners – the finest that I've been able to find – for this level of detail. The fineness of the point ensures that I can work slowly and gradually bring out the textures of stones, small bricks, metals and so on.



10 Frame and backgrounds

I often finish with the frames, the ornamentation, and sometimes the background, only to adjust these elements so that they work with the main image. Sometimes I apply a different texture to what I had initially thought, in order to lighten everything. Here I chose a metallic effect to mimic the sword blades.



11 Apply gold ink

I don't use it in all my artwork, but I seem to be working more and more with gold ink. It enables me to highlight certain parts of the composition, whether that's an important part, blood, golden pieces and so on. Here I want to highlight the tears, which symbolise sadness and nourish the flower that signifies rebirth.



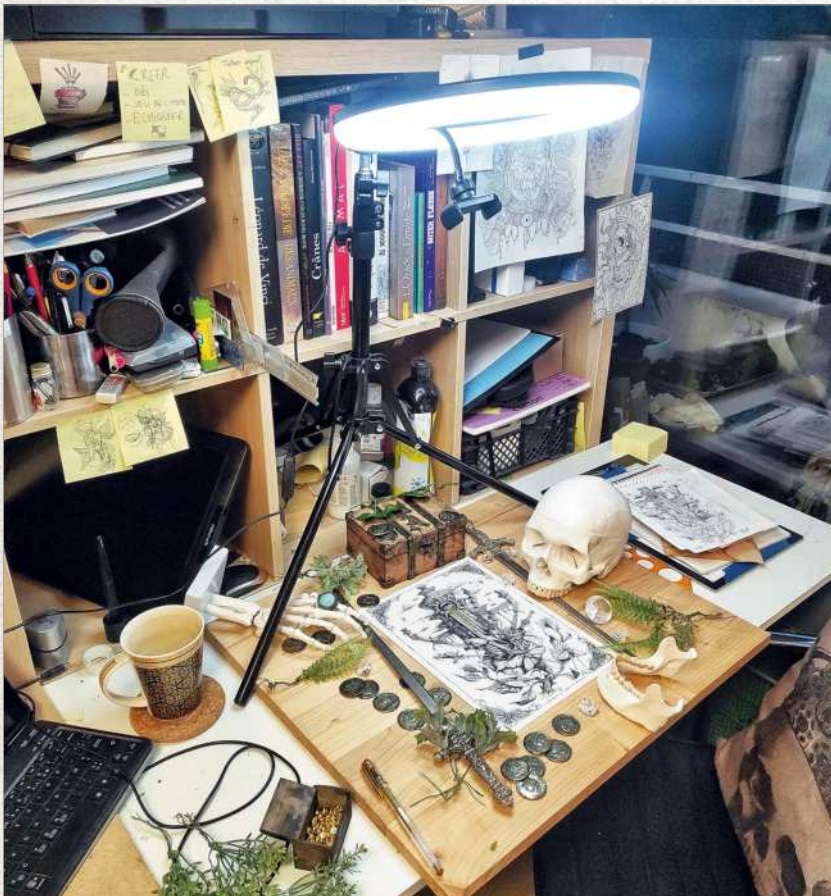
12 Gold details and shadows

Once the gold ink has been added, it must integrate into the overall artwork. Gold ink added at the end of the process takes precedence over the black ink. And for that, you have to give it volume, shadows and sometimes even textures.



13 Preparation of the photo

The creation is finally finished, signed and varnished. Finally, we come to an important stage in my work: the presentation. For that I have a lot of objects linked to the recurring themes that I use in my drawings. I also use them for reference or as models sometimes.



14 Set up the photoshoot

I don't have a very large workspace, let alone a photo studio. Working on small A4 formats most of the time, I just have a wooden board on my drawing desk. I then place my drawing on it, and build up the staging using different objects that I've chosen beforehand. These items evoke themes and elements that appear in the drawing itself.



15 The final picture

Photography is the very last step in my creative process, and one of the most important. It enables me to present my artwork the way I want it to be seen, as shown here, to highlight it, and to share my creations on my social networks. It is the attention I pay to this final step that made it possible for me to discover my world, and to make drawing my daily work. ●

Pencil

3 SIMPLE TIPS FOR PROPORTIONS

CHARLIE PICKARD continues his ten-part series of quick tips on anatomy to improve your figure drawing; this month, he explores effective proportions

One of the first, most important difficulties a student will face as they begin their figure drawing journey is the problem of setting up consistent and solid proportions for every figure. As such, much has been written about ideal proportion systems for the human figure.

Many of these systems are based primarily on the relative size of the

ANATOMY – PART 2

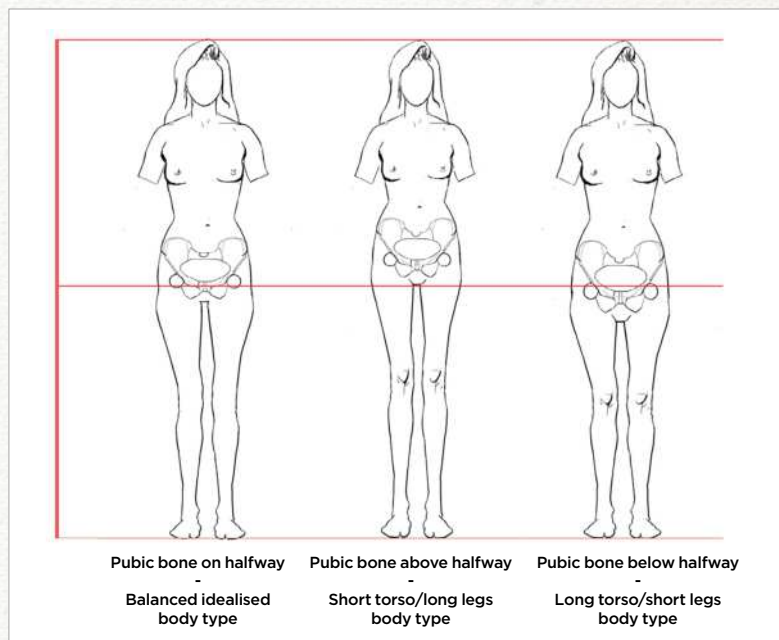
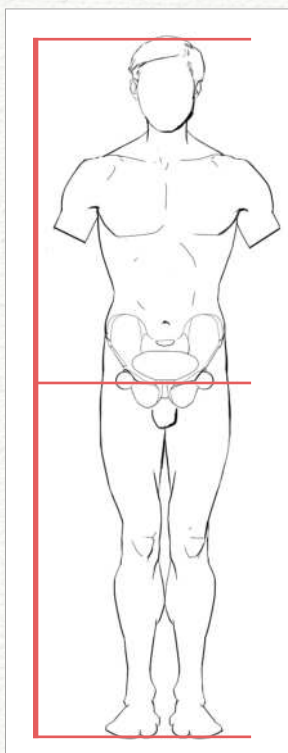
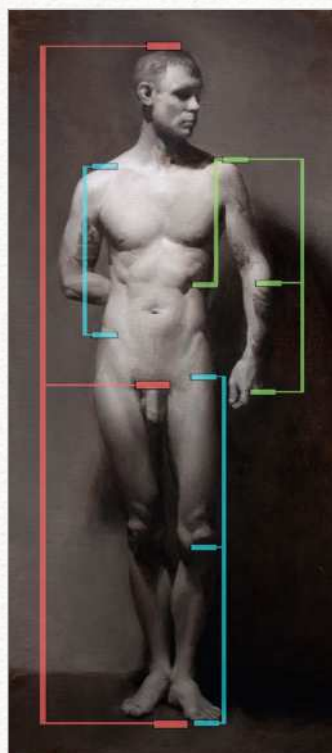
head to the figure. These systems, while immensely useful and worth learning, can be limited in their application, only working when the figure is in a full, un-foreshortened view. Alongside this they can be too complex to check quickly, with the most common proportion being an eight-head tall figure.

In this month's article, I will discuss three simple proportional relationships that I have found very

useful in my own work. These three relationships, based more on comparisons to the torso, are simple to remember, easy to control and very effective.



Charlie Pickard is a classically trained fine artist and illustrator. Recently awarded the Philip de László Award for excellence, Charlie continues to work, exhibit and teach out of his studio in London. www.charliepickardart.com



1 Pubic bone is a useful halfway point

The first of these three proportional relationships, and the one that is most consistently among the first marks that I make in most figure drawings. On any standing figure, this proportion is extremely easy to find and track.

This is an easy control for varying body types

Of course, as with all of these proportions, they are merely an ideal, a useful proportion to vary from. Bodies come in all shapes and sizes and we should strive to represent these varied characteristics in our work.

The real power in this particular proportion lies in just how effective it is for controlling and easily varying the body types of our figure drawings. For example, we can see in the illustration above just how easily we can vary this by simply moving our pelvis in relation to the centre of our figure.

2 Leg proportion splits the body into 3 equal parts

Our second proportion is based on the legs, which will generally be half at the joint of the knee.

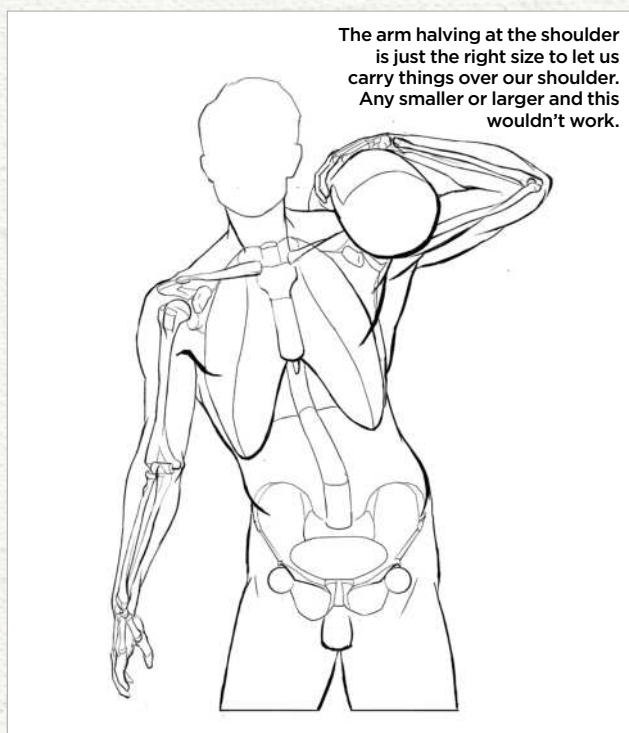
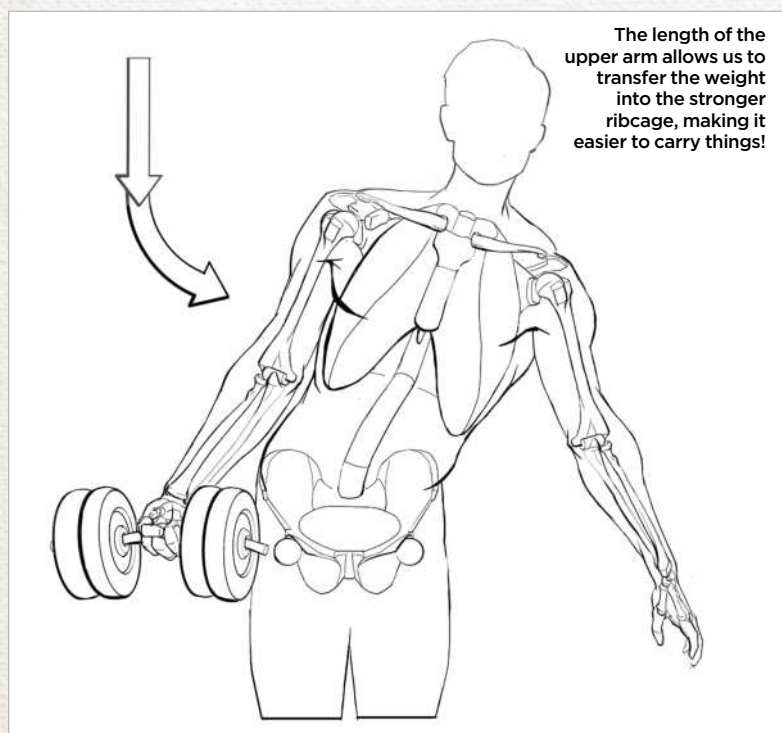
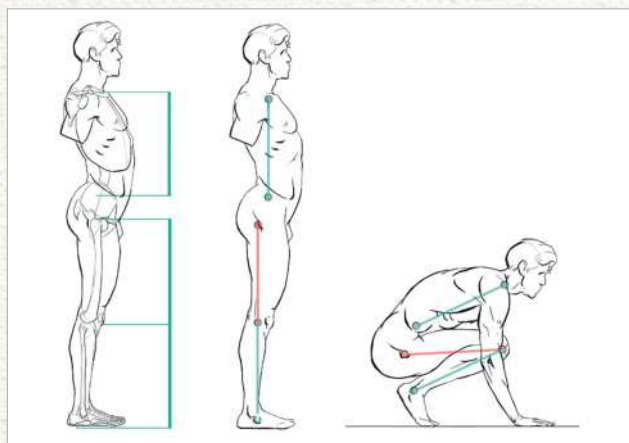
To be more specific, the lower leg from the bottom of the heel will be equal in height to the full length of the femur from the greater trochanter down to the patella.

Even more usefully, this same length will roughly equal the height of the torso down to the start of the pelvis. This breaks down the entire figure into roughly three equal parts.

This relationship lets us fold up compact

I find a helpful way to remember this particular proportion is to consider how it allows us to fold ourselves up into a squat position.

I like to think of this as similar to a three-piece foldaway table. Just like with the table, the three sections of the body need to be a similar size to allow for us to take this efficient, more compact position. So next time you are unsure about the proportions of the legs, consider whether your figure folds up neatly into this shape.



3 Arm proportion

Our third and final proportion relates to the arms. The first element to consider is that the upper arm ends almost exactly at the bottom of the ribcage. When drawing, we can always consider the arc the arm would make back to the torso to easily check if this proportion works in our drawing.

If we consider the halfway point of the arm at the elbow, the forearm is slightly shorter than the upper arm. In fact, the lower arm all the way up to the knuckles of the hand is the same length as the upper arm.

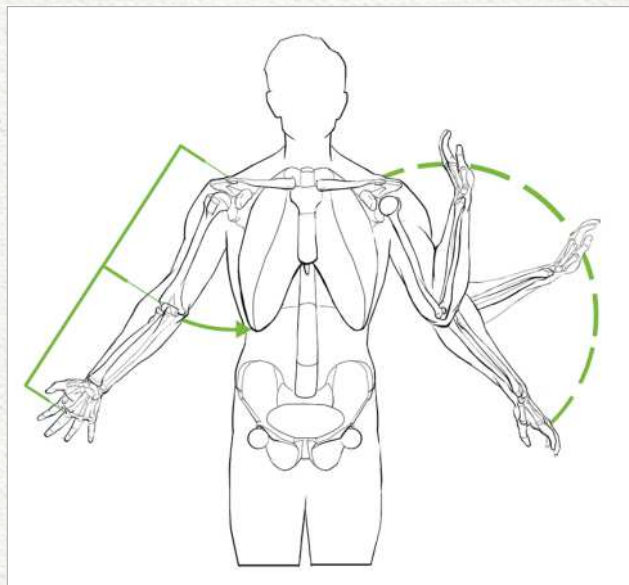
The easiest way to remember this is to consider how, if you bend your arm, your knuckles will end up at the top of your shoulder.

A functional purpose

I like to remember this proportion largely by considering how well it enables the main function of the arm, this being to carry things.

Seen above, the upper arm's alignment with the ribcage allows us to easily transfer the force of a heavy object diagonally into the much stronger muscles of the ribcage, making it easier to carry things.

In a similar way, our knuckles ending at our shoulder makes it incredibly easy for us to carry things over our shoulder. If it were any longer or shorter this would be impossible. Form truly does follow function. Understanding how will always be the easiest way to remember these ideas. ●







Oils

25 TIPS FOR DYNAMIC FANTASY SCENES

RALPH HORSLEY breaks down his oil painting process into 25 expert tips, explaining how to develop your own fantasy scene with a compelling narrative

This painting, 'The Scribe', is the back cover to my art book, *Ralph Horsley: An Art Adventure*. The book is a career retrospective, and this image encompasses the processes and techniques for creating fantastical oil paintings that I have developed over the past 30+ years of my career. These include a dynamic point of view, interesting lighting, storytelling and detail. My work

process has evolved through experimentation, trial and a degree of error. I believe that having a clear methodology helps me create stronger work. This article breaks down my approach into a series of tips that lead from the initial idea and thumbnail sketches through to a completed oil painting. I encourage you to think about your own approach, experimentation and decision making.

Art has been an exciting journey that has taken me from being a teenager playing Dungeons and Dragons to painting cover artwork for the game. I hope this helps you on your own path.



Ralph is a traditional artist who has successfully forged his passions for gaming and fantasy art into a career

painting dragons and goblins.

www.ralphhorsley.co.uk

1 Preparation is key

It can be hard to resist the temptation to launch into a painting straight away. Introducing some preparatory stages prior to that can feel like adding extra work (and time) onto a project, but good preparation will not only help you create a better picture, it's also a more efficient way of working. There is a lot of decision making in creating art, and parcelling them up into bite-size chunks does ease digestion of the whole.

2 Write your own brief

When working on a commercial assignment I will be given a brief. This will have the physical constraints of the dimensions, trade dress and key elements that need to be included. The latter might include specific characters, setting, and focus of the action. You don't need to be as prescriptive, but it is useful to give yourself a starting point and establish a brief for your project.

3 Seek inspiration

Having created my brief, I looked for elements that would work with it. I trawled pictures of medieval rooms, writing slopes, desks, artists' studios – my own in particular. This is a fun exercise where you can let your image search engine take you down all kinds of avenues and back alleys. The best of the bunch can be selected as reference material, but the key is to get your brain working creatively by giving it stimulus. ➡

4 *Explore ideas*

This is when I put pencil to paper and start sketching. I've generated lots of ideas and have piles of reference; this is the stage when I try to make sense of them. These simple sketches are what can be called 'thumbnails', small doodles that are about placing the key elements in compositional relationship to each other. The main figure might be shown by a couple of circles, the desk by a rectangle. This is when you have total freedom to explore compositional ideas. It should be a lot of fun; there is no pressure at this stage to get things 'right', just the exploration of ideas.

5 *Methodology always helps*

Okay, so thumbnails let you do whatever you want, however wacky, but following this method helps to guide that exploratory madness. I always cover some basic ground with my thumbnails. Firstly, viewpoint. Try out three different points of view, looking up (worm's eye), level, looking down (bird's eye). Each creates a different mood. A figure looming over us can appear more powerful, looking down can make the viewer more of a voyeur. Secondly, depth of field. Foreground, middle ground, background - try each of your elements in those different placements. How does that change the composition of your image?

6 *Composition study*

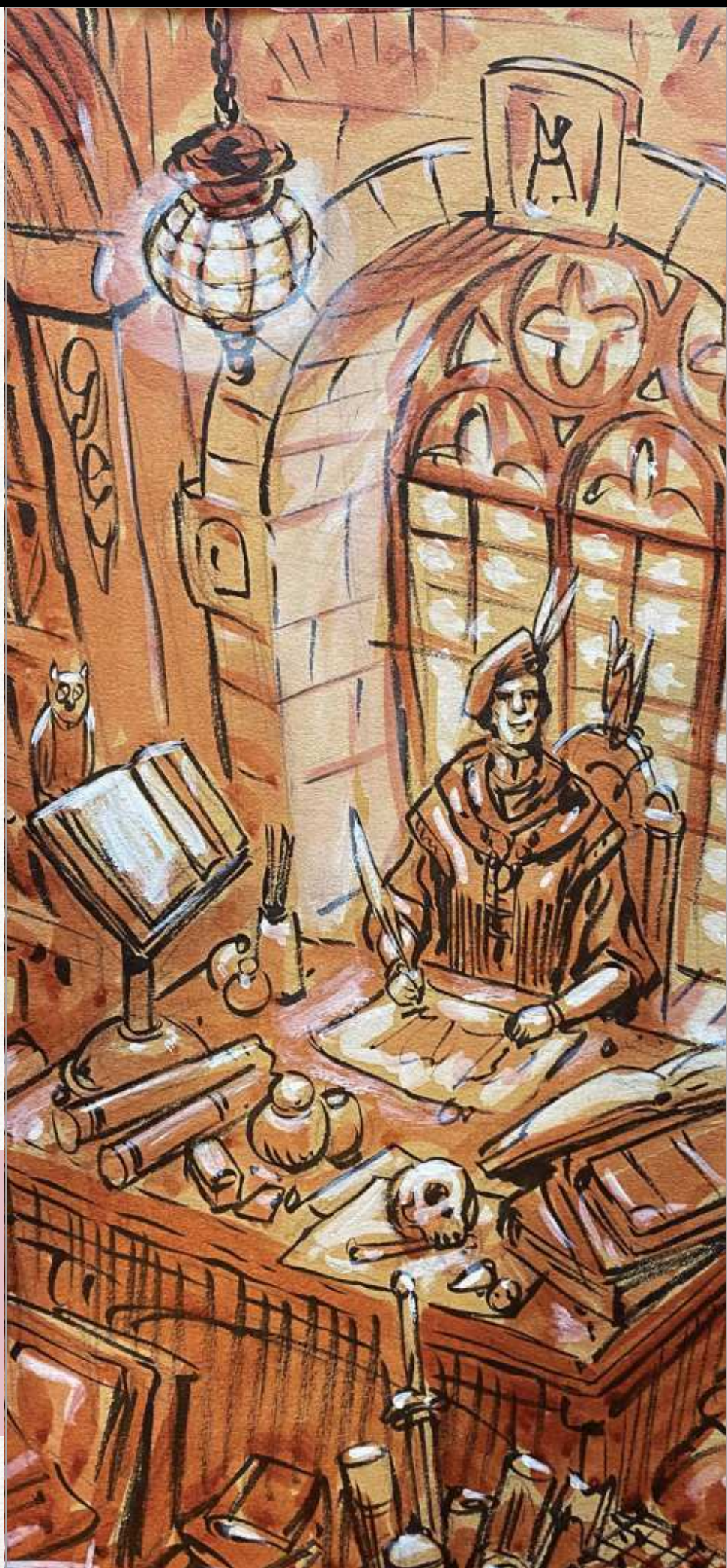
I filter out the ideas I like and create a scaled drawing a quarter the size of the final piece. This enables me to refine my decisions about placement, perspective and lighting. While not fully detailed, this study should resolve any ambiguity in the thumbnail. Perspective will be resolved, extra detail will be added, figure poses more clearly defined, maybe additional features brought in. This also tells me if something isn't working.

7 *Be prepared to scrap*

Realising an element isn't working is a key part of developing one's craft. It is important to be prepared to change. That can mean rubbing something out and starting again. This is so much easier to do with a thumbnail or scaled sketch than a final, so it's important to make that decision early on.

8 *Colour takes the credit...*

...but value does the work. My preference is to draw my study on toned board. I'll create a graphite pencil sketch, add linework with a brushpen, mid values with sepia ink, and highlights with white acrylic paint. This technique lets you explore a full tonal range, which is especially helpful in deciding upon the lighting. Lighting defines form, exemplified by rim light. Crucially it also provides focus.





MATERIALS

SURFACE

- Daler-Rowney mountboard, sandstone
- Laser print on printer paper

PRIMERS

- Liquitex, Clear Gesso
- Liquitex, Acrylic Matte Medium

ACRYLIC PAINTS

- Liquitex, Soft and Heavy Body

OIL PAINTS

- Gamblin, Artist's Oil Colours
- Daler-Rowney, Georgian Oil Colours

MEDIUMS

- M. Graham & Co. Artist's Oil Medium, Walnut Oil
- Winsor & Newton, Oil Colour Mediums, Liquin Light Gel
- Winsor & Newton, Oil Colour Mediums, Drying Linseed Oil

CLEANING AGENT

- Bartoline, Premium Low Odour White Spirit
- Domestic liquid soap

PENS

- Pentel Brush Pen
- Sharpie

GRAPHITE STICKS

- Caran d'Ache, Grafstone, 3B

BRUSHES

- Pro Arte, Sablene, Rounds, 1, 4, 6
- Briston, Silver, Filberts, 2, 4

VARNISH

- Gamblin, Gamvar, Matt
- Gamblin, Gamvar, Gloss

MISCELLANEOUS

- Stanley knife
- Cutting board
- Masking tape
- Steel ruler
- Clear plastic ruler
- Mahl stick
- Apron
- Coffee mug

9 Where is the focus?

Where is the action happening? Where do you want the eye drawn first? 'The Scribe' has a gentle spotlight on the table, the lighter pages and skulls offset against the desk. White sleeves and feathers triangulate our attention to the face. The lantern itself adds height, and thereby depth. The shadows do their part by providing contrast and recession. When constructing a picture, keep in mind that you are deciding how you want the viewer to read it.

10 The base layer

The surface is the foundation of any traditional painting. I like to paint over my sketch, and that influences the materials I use. This painting was going to be finely detailed, so I chose to work my graphite sketch onto the smooth surface of an art board. The board is robust enough to receive several layers of clear gesso, but priming is required to support oil paints. For my landscapes I often paint on more textured canvas that allows different brush marks. Try experimenting and see how surface affects outcome.



11 Preserve the sketch

My sketch is going to have three layers of clear gesso added to it, then oil paint applied. Those stages can easily cause the loss of some of the precious information our sketch has captured. To offset this I will add ink outlines first. Keeping the integrity of the sketch like this gives more freedom when you apply the paint. I also make sure to have a scan of the sketch, which can be referred to as additional backup. Lots of hard work has been done by now, so let's not lose that. ➔

12 *Perspective is the scaffolding*

As lighting aids focus, so too does perspective. Perspective is the physical rule that makes the pictorial world believable. In 'The Scribe' I use three-point perspective to funnel our view onto the figure and his work, adding a sense of drama to an otherwise still picture; another tool to emphasise the focus. The sketch is the framework for the paint, and perspective the scaffolding for the sketch.

13 *Choose your palette*

The complementary colours of red and orange will create a different mood to that of clashing purples and greens. I experiment with different combinations on a scaled-down printout of the sketch. I like to use acrylic paint because of its drying time, and flexibility to work into areas with additional layers. This can be a really exciting process; it's about laying down blocks of colour and not worrying about the details. There are no mistakes, just print out another copy and try something different. One exercise is to try limiting your palette to as few colours as possible.

14 *Reference as visual memory*

Through creating art one builds up a visual memory, but while we can easily recognise things, reproducing them accurately is more challenging. You can't be expected to rely on that memory alone, hence the value of reference material. I had lots of everyday objects to hand – bottles, jars, books, skulls, etc – that I could reference directly. For other items, like the lantern, I looked at photos to see how they are constructed then created my own design. The real world is the ideal starting point from which to build the fantastical.

15 *Remember to tell stories*

Your painting should have a narrative drive. This one is relatively simple, a scribe creating a book, but that story is embellished by the objects around him. Where did the cyclops skull come from? Or those masks? Is that egg going to hatch? I like to have an easily read, overarching story, followed by lots of side quests and reveals when you look closer. Even the page he is working on echoes the contents of the book that this image is the back cover to. Telling stories is fun.

16 *Hot and cold*

Warm and cool colours give an interesting push and pull. The warm reds and browns in 'The Scribe' contrast with the cool blue-grey of the window, helping the latter act as a framing device.

17 *One at a time*

Lots of these tips encourage experimentation. That is how you learn preferences and outcomes. It keeps your creative process fresh and moving forward. Stasis is stagnation. Remember to change only one variable at a time, be it surface, medium or brush – that way you can know what is affecting your results.



18 *How wet?*

I've made lots of decisions up to now. What remains is the application of the paint. Oil paints are accompanied by different mediums. Each of those will change the consistency of the paint and accelerate, or retard, drying time. I use walnut oil, drying linseed oil and Liquin. The linseed oil is the mid-range, it adds flow to the paint and reasonable drying time. Walnut oil gives a lovely viscous quality, but stays wet for days; whereas Liquin dries fast, but is gloopy. I use them in different combinations. Walnut plus Liquin gives a nicer paint texture, and dries faster. Each equation has its own merits.



19 *Make your mark*

In digital art there can be a drive to personalise brushes to generate different marks. The same holds true traditionally. The three classic brush shapes – round, flat and filbert – combined with size and material, each offers their own distinct mark. I've already made my decisions about colour through my earlier study, now I can concentrate on how I paint.

20 *Mix on the palette*

I like to mix up my range of colours on the palette before I apply any paint. I lay out my colour selection as decided upon through my colour studies. This makes it much easier to pick from, without mixing as you go. Also by using a palette knife, or old brush, you are keeping your paint brushes in good condition.

21 *Side by side*

Transitions from one value to another can be accomplished in oils by applying the paints side by side, then use a dry brush to blend them together. This is a very effective blending technique.

22 *Losing the edge*

Remember we are trying to keep the picture's focus. That means the focal areas, the figure and desktop, are tightly rendered with clear detail. Conversely, as we move to the edge of the image everything becomes a little softer – edges are lost and merge into the shadows. This is a continuation of one's lighting choices. Use the blending technique above to soften and lose those edges.

23 *Check values*

Before calling a painting done, the main area I will assess is the value range. How do the lights and darks read against one another? A handy technique is to take a photo on your phone, then edit the image to remove all the saturation, turning it into a greyscale image. That helps you read the picture without the distraction of colour. Remember tip #8.

24 *Look after your materials*

If you look after your tools they will look after you. Take care to thoroughly clean your brushes. I use home decorating brush cleaner and liquid soap to remove the oil. Any detergent works well. Brushes will deteriorate, losing their shape over time, but in turn they can generate interesting and different marks.

25 *Reflection*

I like to keep a finished painting propped up in my studio whilst working on new pieces. This gives me the opportunity to reflect on it, and inform myself as I move forward. One needs to develop a critical eye to assess what could have been improved, but equally important is to credit yourself with what did work well. Take that knowledge and apply it your next painting. ●





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